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Amir, Crown Prince, PM join luncheon at Azayez farm



In the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah family members, a luncheon was held by Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Azayez farm in Kuwait's northern Al-Abdali area on Wednesday.

Amiri Diwan photos



HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Worshiping individuals is the cause of the nation's loss, backwardness, and decline

Many foxes surround us today, so be cautious not to become their prey.

My father was devoured by some in your skulk, but my voice is just as sweet as his.

The rooster closed its eyes for a moment, and then the fox struck.

Closed eyes, when they should be open, bring about the ruin of their owner.

Tell the village dogs that this rooster does not belong to their farm.

Cursed is the mouth that speaks when it should remain silent.

Dispose of the bag of dust and divide the supply equally between both sides.

The man said, "I am an ordinary man," so the camel owner dismissed his advice.

May God curse you. You are neither a scholar nor a prominent figure, so why offer me advice?

Instead of focusing on the ideas, people tend to focus on who said them.

3

Illegal passenger transport in Kuwait faces KD 150 fine

Mol rolls out several amendments to Traffic Law

By Munif Naif

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Ministry of Interior has announced several amendments to the Traffic Law, which will take effect on April 22. These new rules introduce stricter penalties for various traffic violations to enhance road safety and ensure proper use of public spaces.

One of the main changes involves the use of buggies and bicycles. Driving these vehicles in areas not designated for them will incur a fine of KD 150. If the case is taken to court, the penalty could result in imprisonment for a period between one year and three years and/or a fine ranging from KD 600 to KD 1,000.

Using a motor vehicle to transport passengers for a fee without the proper permit will also attract a fine of KD 150. Should the case be referred to court, the penalty may include imprisonment for up to three years and/or a fine ranging from KD 600 to KD 1,000.

Driving on the shoulder of the road will now be subject to a KD 75 fine. If the case goes to court, the punishment could be imprisonment for up to three months and/or a fine ranging between KD 150 and KD 300.

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The Minister of Defense during his meeting with senior army commanders at the ministry's headquarters on the occasion of his appointment as Minister of Defense.

Ministry of Defense photo

New Defense Minister vows stronger military readiness

Newly-appointed Kuwaiti Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah conveyed Wednesday his appreciation for the trust bestowed upon him by the state's leadership.

He appreciated the confidence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Supreme Commander of the Armed

forces, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

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Courts show strength in high-profile key cases

By Jaber Al-Hamoud

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: In a series of notable legal proceedings, Kuwait's courts have delivered substantial sentences in cases involving forgery and the unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.

The Court of Cassation sentenced a Saudi national to seven years in prison with hard labor for forging Kuwaiti citizenship.

The individual, employed as a correspondent in the Ministry of Justice, unlawfully obtained approximately 498,000 Kuwaiti dinars in benefits, including 62,000 dinars in salaries from

the Ministry of Justice, 5,750 dinars from the Credit Bank, 20,000 dinars from the Public Authority for Manpower, and 17,000 dinars from Housing Care. The court also imposed a fine equivalent to the amount fraudulently acquired.

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NewsWatch

KUWAIT CITY: The Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) inked on Wednesday a contract to lease Ooredoo a plot of land for KD 16 million (USD 51.8 million).

Under the contract, Ooredoo will use the land, located in the Capital governorate, as administrative headquarters for 10 years.

The terms of the lease are in keeping with the ministerial decree No. 1274 (2023) and its executive statutes, according to a CITRA statement received by KUNA. (KUNA)

RAMALLAH: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas expressed on Wednesday strong rejection of calls to seize the Gaza Strip and displace Palestinians outside their homeland.

President Abbas said, in a press statement and in response to the US takeover of Gaza Strip, that the leadership will not allow harm to the rights of Palestinian people, for which they have fought for many decades and sacrificed greatly. (KUNA)

Day by Day

MINISTERS, open your doors to your citizens. Stop avoiding meetings with those who wish to share their grievances or offer advice.

Open your doors as some neighboring countries do, where the lights of progress shine brightly.

These nations excel in quick decision-making, efficient infrastructure development, rapid growth and enjoy prosperity, stability, security and openness -- all of which are clear indicators of their advancement.

... Yet tomorrow is another day.

Zahed Matar



Photo by Mohammad Morsi

The Kuwait sky glows with a breathtaking amber hue, highlighted by spectacular cloud formations, offering a stunning visual spectacle.

Strong winds, dust to persist until Thursday

Meteorological Department Director Dirar Al-Ali warned that Kuwait will experience strong southeasterly winds exceeding 60 km/h until Thursday morning, causing dust, especially in open areas.

Speaking to Kuwait News Agency

(KUNA), Al-Ali said the dusty conditions will reduce horizontal visibility, while sea waves may rise above seven feet. Scattered light rain is also possible on Thursday.

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8 Gulf Bank joins KFAS and IE Business School's 2024-'25 Innovation Program

8 Burgan Bank launches first Certificates of Deposit program in Kuwait



10 NBK maintains a strong financial position to sustain growth into 2025, says Al-Bahar

Prayer Timings

Fajr 05:14 Asr 15:07
 Sunrise... 06:35 Maghrib .. 17:29
 Zohr 12:02 Isha 18:48

Local

Expected weather for next 24 hrs:

By Day: Warm and cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate northwesterly wind to light variable wind, with speeds of 08-32 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

Weather

By Night: Rather cold to cold with light to moderate freshening at times northwesterly wind, with speeds of 10-40 km/h.

Station	Max Exp	Min Rec
Kuwait City	21	15
Kuwait Airport	24	11

Abdaly	26	10
Bubyan	20	15
Jahra	26	10
Failaka Island	23	15
Salmiyah	20	16
Ahmadi	24	09
Jal Aliyah	25	09
Nuwaisib	25	09

'New co-op law likely to be approved before Ramadan'

'Elections postponed in interest of Kuwait, its people'

By Fares Al-Abdan

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: "We decided to postpone the elections in the interest of the country and its people," says Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah.

This is a confirmation of the report about postponing such elections that the newspaper published earlier.

In a statement on the sidelines of the flag raising event at the Social Care Homes Complex on Tuesday, Al-Huwailah affirmed "we were confident when we took this decision, because it serves public interest. It is aimed at stopping certain practices. We are currently preparing a legislation that will be better for shareholders and in order to protect their interest."

She reiterated the ministry is in the process of completing a new law for cooperative work that might be approved before the holy month of Ramadan or once it is completed.

She also pointed out in her speech during the ceremony that "the National Day celebrations are a valuable opportunity to emphasize the values of belonging and loyalty that unite us as Kuwaitis and embody our love for this dear country; while reminding us of our history and



Photo by Samer Shaqir
 Minister of Social Affairs, Family and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah kisses the forehead of an elderly woman at the event.

great achievements, which were made possible due to the solidarity of our wise leadership and our noble people."

She stressed that "raising the flag today is a renewal of our covenant with our beloved country. With all our efforts and sincerity, we strive to preserve and develop it, and to work continuously to achieve more progress and prosperity in all fields for this country to remain a source of pride for all of us and an oasis of security in which we all take refuge."

She continued: On this dear occasion, I am pleased to extend a word of thanks and appreciation to the Social Care Sector, which works tirelessly to provide social care to all deserving categories -- the elderly, children including those under family foster care and people with disabilities. It is keen on providing a healthy and safe environment for every individual in society to live with dignity in his homeland. This dedication reflects the true image of Kuwait -- the country of humanity, the country of goodness and giving, the country of authentic values.

Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary for the Social Care Sector Dr. Jassim Al-Kandari stated that "the flag is the symbol of our pride and belonging to our beloved country, Kuwait. On this day, we renew our pledge to work with sincerity and dedication in serving our society. The flag that flies high in our sky today is a trust in the necks of all of us. We defend it with our work, protect it with our sincerity, and raise it with our achievements in various fields."

He added that Kuwait reached the progress and prosperity it is experiencing today only through the grace of Allah, and then the solidarity of its loyal sons who worked hard and sincerely, putting the interest of the country above all considerations.

He clarified that the sector is not just a system of services; it is also a shield that protects the most needy groups, a basic tributary to enhance societal cohesion and a driver of sustainable development.



Amiri Diwan photo
 Advisor at the Amiri Diwan, Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamoud with a teacher who was honored.

Amiri Diwan honors educators for outstanding achievements

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Advisor at the Amiri Diwan, Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamoud, recently honored Kuwaiti teacher Jawaher Ajeer Al-Asimi for winning the Distinguished Teacher Award at the Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation Awards for Educational Excellence 2024 at the Gulf level, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This recognition highlights the significant contributions of Kuwaiti women to the nation's record of educational excellence.

In a separate acknowledgment, Sheikh

Faisal Al-Hamoud received Dr. Iman Taama Al-Shammari, who was selected as an ambassador for the Women in Data Science (WiDS) initiative in Kuwait, launched by Stanford University.

This initiative aims to empower women in the field of data science through conferences and educational programs.

Sheikh Faisal emphasized the esteemed role of Kuwaiti women, acknowledging their continuous and honorable achievements across various fields.

MoSA disburses all dues to affected employees

Over 80 female staff impacted by nationality withdrawal

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The total number of female employees at the Ministry of Social Affairs who were recently affected by decisions and decrees to withdraw or revoke citizenship based on Article 8 has surpassed 80 in various sectors of the ministry. However, no employee holding the director, supervisor, or department head positions are included in this group, reports Al-Jarida daily quoting informed sources.

They explained that the Financial and Administrative Affairs Department of the Ministry

of Social Affairs recently disbursed all financial dues to these employees, in coordination with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) and in line with directives from the political leadership.

The working team, recently formed based on a decision by the acting Undersecretary of the ministry Dr. Khaled Al-Ajmi to implement procedures for female employees whose citizenships were withdrawn, is continuing its efforts by reviewing the names received from relevant authorities and taking the necessary actions.

The team is finalizing contracts for the employees' assistance starting from the day following the decisions and decrees were issued and published in the official gazette for a period of one year. Each affected female employee will receive a monthly bonus equivalent to her last full salary prior to the decision, in accordance with the rules, laws, and regulations of the CSC, and in coordination with other relevant government bodies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Public Institution for Social Security and CSC.

Farwaniya Governor briefed on Ramadan preparedness

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received the new Director of the Farwaniya Mosques Department Faisal Sayyah Al-Mutairi in his office at the General Diwan of Farwaniya Governorate this morning.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, Al-Mutairi briefed the governor on the latest preparations and arrangements for welcoming the holy month of Ramadan and ensuring all necessary provisions are in place.

He also discussed the maintenance work being carried out in the mosques to prepare them for receiving worshippers during the holy month.

Sheikh Athbi affirmed the importance of building cooperation

and communication between Farwaniya Governorate and the Farwaniya Mosques Department. He urged for continued support to enable them to carry out their work effectively.

He highlighted the need to develop programs and cultural advocacy activities that enhance the mosque's role in education, guidance, and counseling, thus advancing the religious and educational message in a way that benefits the people of Farwaniya Governorate.

At the end of the meeting, Al-Mutairi expressed his gratitude for Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser's commitment and interest in overseeing the department's work, as well as his efforts to provide all forms of support to ensure the best service is delivered to the mosques.



Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah receives the new Director of the Farwaniya Mosques Department Faisal Sayyah Al-Mutairi.

Call for Kuwait, GCC countries to strengthen ties with Cyprus

By Marwa Al-Bahravi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Republic of Cyprus, Abdullah Al-Kharafi, emphasized the importance of enhancing dialogue and rapprochement at both the official and popular levels between Kuwait and Cyprus, as well as between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Arab nations and Cyprus.

Speaking during a meeting he hosted, attended by the President of the Cypriot House of Representatives, Anita Demetriou, along with ambassadors from GCC and Arab countries, Al-Kharafi highlighted the role of the Council of Arab Ambassadors to Cyprus in closely monitoring regional developments.



Al-Kharafi

He specifically pointed to the evolving situations in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine, stressing their impact on peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Ambassador Al-Kharafi underlined the significance of such diplomatic engagements, noting that they demonstrate Cyprus' commitment to strengthening ties with Kuwait and other GCC nations. He described the meeting as a valuable opportunity to exchange views on pressing regional and international issues.

For her part, Demetriou welcomed such initiatives, highlighting the deep and strong relations between Cyprus and Kuwait. She reaffirmed her country's commitment to furthering diplomatic and economic cooperation with Kuwait and the wider Arab world.

This meeting reflects Kuwait's ongoing efforts to bolster regional diplomacy and international cooperation, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration in addressing shared challenges.

Defense Ministry reaffirms support for sustainability

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Hussam Al-Atiqi, the Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Military Facilities Engineering at the Ministry of Defense, reaffirmed the Ministry's dedication to adopting best engineering practices and developing infrastructure according to the latest standards, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

This commitment aims to support future projects and achieve sustainable development in the region, he said.

Al-Atiqi's statement was made during the Ministry's participation in the Gulf Forum for Sustainable Development and Project Management.

The forum serves as a platform to enhance joint cooperation and exchange expertise in development and engineering management, focusing on upgrading military facilities and improving the efficiency of engineering projects.

The Gulf Forum for Sustainable Development and Project Management brings together experts to discuss sustainable solutions and effective project management practices.

The event emphasizes the importance of collaboration among Gulf governments and entrepreneurs to address development priorities and promote sustainable entrepreneurship from a regional perspective.

By participating in such forums, the Ministry of Defense demonstrates its commitment to integrating sustainable practices into military infrastructure projects, aligning with broader regional goals for sustainable development and effective project management.

MEW queries CSC on pay scale for revoked nationalities

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has asked the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to clarify the nature of the comprehensive salary mentioned in its decisions regarding the re-employment of those whose nationalities were withdrawn, reports Al-Anba daily

quoting sources from the ministry.

Sources pointed out the ambiguity in the definition of 'comprehensive salary' in terms of the amounts allocated for social security or deducting them from the salary, especially since those whose nationalities were withdrawn are not covered by the social security system.

Sources said the new contracts are currently being signed with those whose nationalities were withdrawn, indicating their number in the ministry exceeds 100. Sources added the objective of this step is to amend their status in accordance with the applicable employment decisions.

'Palestinians hold sovereignty over Strip'

UK seeks to boost humanitarian partnership with Kuwait in Gaza

By Paul Francis X. Fernandes

Arab Times/Al-Seyassah Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Mark Bryson-Richardson, UK Special Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, praised the role played by the Kuwaiti government's and the humanitarian efforts of private charitable organizations in Kuwait in support of Palestine.

He affirmed the United Kingdom's strong desire to continue expanding its humanitarian and development partnerships with Kuwait, both in Gaza and elsewhere.

This came during a press conference held at the British Embassy in Kuwait before his departure, with representatives of Kuwaiti newspapers.

Bryson-Richardson disclosed that he held meetings with several officials in Kuwait, including the Acting Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development.

Recently, in September, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office signed two Memoranda of Understanding with the fund, committing to joint funding of \$6 million (\$3 million each) to support UNICEF's work in restoring water supply and sanitation systems in Gaza and sustaining primary healthcare services in Yemen, he said.

Meeting

Bryson-Richardson also met with the Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab World Affairs and Development and International Cooperation.

He mentioned meeting with United Nations representatives, including the UN Resident Coordinator in Kuwait, Ghada Al-Taher, Palestinian Ambassador Rami Tahboub, representatives from the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society, the Kuwait Relief Society, and the International Islamic Charity Organization.

Bryson-Richardson also met with Omar Fouda, the International Trade Manager for the UK government-funded export program, which assists Palestinian businesses in exporting their products to foreign markets, including Kuwait.

In response to a question about the impact of the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, Bryson-Richardson said there has been some improvement in the flow of aid, with more trucks now entering Gaza daily. However, he noted the significant challenges that lie ahead.

He confirmed that the United Kingdom has provided £129 million in humanitarian aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territories so far in the current financial year, including £41 million to UNRWA.

Bryson-Richardson called on Israeli authorities to expand the scale and scope of goods allowed into Gaza, noting that key items like mattresses are currently prohibited on the basis that they may be used for dual purposes and urged the resumption of the flow of commercial goods, which are critical to revitalizing Gaza's economic recovery.

He added that while addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza --including restoring basic services like electricity and clean water supply -- remains an overwhelming short-term priority, the United Kingdom is working with partners, including the World Bank, UNDP, and the Palestinian Authority, on reconstruction plans.

Bryson-Richardson expected Kuwait to continue playing a prominent role in efforts to provide a better future for the Palestinian people, both individually and through its presidency of the GCC.

He affirmed the United Kingdom's unwavering support for a two-state solution that includes the establishment and international recognition of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

He confirmed that the British government



Bryson-Richardson

will continue to take action in response to the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, increasing settler violence, and growing restrictions on the freedoms of Palestinian civilians in the West Bank.

Bryson-Richardson stressed the need for the international community to come together in support of the Palestinian Authority, which the United Kingdom -- in line with Kuwait and the broader GCC -- views as the legitimate body to advance the interests of the Palestinian people in both the West Bank and Gaza, as opposed to Hamas or other militant groups.

In response to President Trump's calls for Gazans to temporarily relocate to Egypt or Jordan, he stated that the Palestinian people hold sovereignty over the Strip and have the right to determine their future.

He condemned the detention conditions facing detainees on both sides, noting that Israel's treatment of Palestinian prisoners was one of the three key reasons the United Kingdom suspended arms export licenses for items used by the IDF in Gaza in September.

He called on all parties to continue moving forward with ongoing hostage-prisoner exchanges in good faith to unlock the critical second phase of the ceasefire agreement.

He also held discussions with the Deputy Assistant Foreign Ministers for Arab World Affairs and Development and International Cooperation Affairs, focusing on enhancing bilateral cooperation in humanitarian endeavors.

Bryson-Richardson engaged with representatives from various organizations, including the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society, Kuwait Society for Relief, and the International Islamic Charity Organization. These discussions centered on strengthening partnerships to deliver effective humanitarian aid in conflict-affected regions.

Ceasefire

Regarding the recent Israel-Hamas ceasefire, Bryson-Richardson acknowledged improvements in aid delivery to Gaza but emphasized the significant challenges that remain.

He highlighted the UK's provision of £129 million in humanitarian assistance to the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the current financial year, including £41 million for UNRWA. He urged Israeli authorities to expand the range of goods permitted into Gaza to facilitate economic recovery and meet essential needs.

Bryson-Richardson reiterated the UK's unwavering support for a two-state solution, envisioning an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

He affirmed the UK's commitment to addressing issues such as the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements and increasing restrictions on Palestinian civilians in the West Bank.

HORIZON TALK

Ahmed Al-Jarallah



Worshiping individuals is the cause of the nation's loss, backwardness, and decline

WHEN a person falls victim to false temptations, he becomes a prisoner to those who seek to exploit him for their own gain. It is therefore said, "Do not speak when you should be silent. Do not trust appearances without testing them, lest you become prey to the many foxes around these days, as they seek to swallow the whole world in various ways."

The following story illustrates how someone deals naively with the events he encounters:

A fox passed by a rooster and thought to make it its prey. He decided to use a trick to deceive the rooster, and said, "Oh, beautiful rooster, I miss the crowing of your father. Is he still alive?"

The rooster replied, "No, a fox from your skulk preyed on him. But my voice is just as sweet, if you'd like to hear it."

The fox replied, "That's great... then, let me hear you."

The rooster, feeling moved, closed his eyes and began to crow. Immediately, the fox pounced and grabbed him in its mouth, ready to offer him as a meal to his wife.

Some village dogs noticed the fox snatching the rooster, and the fox quickly ran away. However, the rooster realized this trick and said to the fox, "You don't have to run from the dogs and get exhausted. Just tell them this rooster does not belong to their farm."

The fox followed the rooster's advice. However, as every trick has its flaws, the rooster fell from the fox's mouth and managed to escape. At that moment, the fox said with regret, "Cursed is the mouth that speaks when it should remain silent," to

Many foxes surround us today, so be cautious not to become their prey.

My father was devoured by some in your skulk but my voice is just as sweet as his.

The rooster closed its eyes for a moment, and then the fox struck.

Closed eyes, when they should be open, bring about the ruin of their owner.

Tell the village dogs that this rooster does not belong to their farm.

Cursed is the mouth that speaks when it should remain silent.

Dispose of the bag of dust and divide the supply equally between both sides.

The man said, "I am an ordinary man," so the camel owner dismissed his advice.

May God curse you. You are neither a scholar nor a prominent figure, so why offer me advice?

Instead of focusing on the ideas, people tend to focus on who said them.

which the rooster replied, "Cursed is the eye that closes when it should stay open."



When the mind is absent

The following story serves as a lesson for those whose minds are absent, and who blindly follow the misleading allure of titles and ranks.

The story begins with a man encountering

a nomadic traveler near a well. He noticed that the camel's load was unusually heavy, so he asked the Arab about the contents. The nomad explained that one bag contained food, and the other bag was filled with dust to balance the load.

The man then suggested, "Why not dispense with the bag of dust and split the food into two balanced bags? This way, you would lighten the load on your camel."

The nomad liked the idea and responded, "You are right." He followed the advice and rearranged the load accordingly.

Curious, the nomad then asked, "Are you a tribal sheikh or a scholar?"

The man replied, "Neither. I am just an ordinary man."

Upon hearing this, the nomad was offended and cursed the man, saying, "May God curse you... You are neither a tribal sheikh nor a scholar, yet you dare to advise me? How dare you!"

He then returned the camel's load to its previous state. This reflects the way most people are. They do not take an idea into consideration unless it comes from someone they perceive as important. Their focus is more on the person than on the idea itself.

It is a huge sin to blindly worship human beings and follow their teachings and ideas without question. This kind of attitude has led to the downfall of many nations.

A free person defends the idea, no matter who speaks it, but a slave-like person defends the individual, regardless of the merit of their ideas.

Wisdom is knowing what you are doing, and success is doing it quietly. Life is full of tasks to accomplish. All you need to do is keep working without looking back, so you don't lose everything.



The eye is a mirror that reflects what is inside the soul. Look carefully into someone's eyes to understand what is in their heart.



The people of Sham, and perhaps others also, say: "A cat may give birth to an ostrich, an ant may lay a pigeon's egg, but it is impossible for a dog's tail to become straight."



We should not react negatively to others' favors. Dealing harshly with those whom you once helped turns your good deeds into something evil.



The government is urged to draw attention to the need for skilled professionals. Most national employees are in administrative roles, and there is a shortage of engineers, technicians, and factory workers. Encourage the people and offer high salaries and additional privileges to professionals rather than administrative workers.



In some advanced countries, teachers' salaries are higher than those of ministers. The reason is that it is the teacher who shapes the people who build the nation's future, such as inventors, engineers, and intellectuals.



Industrial and food security need incentives as well as gratitude, not disruptive decisions, stinginess, or envy.

diwaniya

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

Kuwait is our soul ... patriotism is not just singing and dancing

"CELEBRATING the National Day is not just songs and dancing. Celebrating the National Day is not just festivals and parades, but rather practices that reinforce it within every Kuwaiti and those who live on this land, happy and comfortable," columnist and former Deputy Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) **Iqbal Al-Ahmad** wrote for *Al-Qabas* daily.

"The National Day is a feeling that must be translated in all forms and transformed into intensive lessons that reinforce this belonging and this feeling."

"During the days of February, the month of national holidays, I am not saying that we must intensify our national sense, because that should not stop for a single minute in our lives, at home, school and in the media, but that this belonging and national sense should be translated into behaviors and practices."

"Patriotism is a permanent state, patriotism is a state of gratitude, patriotism is a state of love from both sides."

"The homeland is invisible... it is translated through all the services, stability, security, safety and forms of prosperity that it provides, while the other party is us, the citizens, through our efforts and behaviors that transform love and pride into daily practices in the street, at work and abroad as well."

"The worst thing is that any talk about strengthening patriotism and belonging to the national identity is interpreted as a form of racism."

"When I am accused of racism, because I seek and work to restore Kuwait to a clean, sparkling, shining and radiant state... then racism is welcome."



Iqbal Al-Ahmad

"When I am accused of racism, if I encourage, support and applaud all attempts, initiatives and measures to clean up all types of corruption in my country, then welcome to racism."

"I hope that schools at all levels and types will intensify their activities in February, by allocating a daily class throughout this month to this topic, by explaining all types of belonging and how to transform it from words to action and practicing this type of belonging within the walls of classrooms and schools, at home, on the street and in public life."

"Why aren't children invited to answer a big question, 'What does Kuwait mean to you?'"

"Then all the answers are taken and the best 10 answers are selected and turned into logos that are printed on shirts and T-shirts that are distributed to school students at symbolic prices. This is something that can be cooperated on between the Ministry and the private sector."

"Contributing to cleaning and public agriculture in state facilities is a form of patriotism. Helping the needy and volunteering is a form of patriotism and charity."

"It is very beautiful to sing and dance for our country and it is even more beautiful to be accompanied by self, and mentally strengthening the concept of patriotism and the characteristics of our dear country, Kuwait. This is the country that we should be proud of and show off to the world."

"Let us teach our children to criticize in a sophisticated manner, to propose solutions immediately and to take the initiative to participate in the solution if they can."

"Our country is beautiful and even more beautiful are its people and residents."

"May God preserve our Kuwait for us, it is a blessing that we lost in 1990 without any warning on August 2 and in a sudden manner and at that moment we felt that we had lost our souls."

-- Compiled by PFX Fernandes

Fencing body ex-head jailed four years in money-laundering case

14 drug-users nabbed; 33 minors caught driving

By Jaber Al-Hamoud/Munif Nayef
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Criminal Court has sentenced the former president of the Fencing Federation to four years in prison and imposed a fine of 200,000 dinars after finding him guilty of money laundering to the tune of 1,181,000 dinars and forgery.

A travel agency employee involved in the case received a three-year prison term and will be deported following the completion of the sentence. The court has also referred the civil suit for further proceedings.

Representing the Kuwaiti national team players, Lawyer Abdul Mohsen Al-Qattan filed a civil claim seeking 5,001 dinars as temporary compensation for damages incurred.

This verdict underscores the judiciary's commitment to combating financial crimes and maintaining integrity within sports institutions.



14 drug-users nabbed: Rescue patrols have been actively conducting security campaigns in all governorates. Over the past seven days, these campaigns led to the arrest of 14 drug users, who were referred to the Drugs Control General Department.

According to weekly statistics issued by the rescue patrols, they carried out 1,373 security operations, which resulted in the arrest of two individuals wanted for specific charges and 39 others wanted for other reasons.

In addition, 43 individuals who were reported as absconding, 42 without proper identification, and 42 with expired residency permits were arrested.

The patrols also seized 97 vehicles that were wanted by the judiciary and referred them to the relevant authorities.

In addition, they resolved nine quarrels, issued 66 citations for parking in designated disabled spaces, impounded two vehicles, and responded to 130 traffic accidents.

According to a security source, the rescue police patrols will continue their security campaigns and checkpoints to apprehend wanted individuals and criminals.



33 minors arrested: Under the guidance of the Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs and Operations Major General Yousef Al-Khudda, traffic patrols carried out weekly campaigns, the last of which resulted in the arrest of 43 reckless drivers and 33 minors driving without licenses.

Also, 46,730 traffic citations were issued, and 63 vehicles and 98 motorcycles were seized.

They also arrested four individuals for drug possession, three for appearing intoxicated, eight for lacking any identification documents, and 52 for residency violations. They seized 74 vehicles due to outstanding judicial seizures, and responded to 1,263 traffic accidents, which had resulted in 241 injuries.

According to a security source, ongoing traffic campaigns targeting reckless driving will continue to monitor highways, desert areas, and known gathering spots, and legal action will be taken against all offenders.

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Man held for insulting leadership

By Jaber Al-Hamoud
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Criminal Court sentenced an individual to two-year imprisonment for insulting His Highness the Amir and offending His Highness the Prime Minister and the First Deputy Prime Minister.

He had been arrested by State Security for posting the offensive remarks on his X account.

The Public Prosecution had charged the accused with publicly attacking the rights and authority of His Highness the Amir by writing and publishing insulting remarks on his X account.

Former minister pushes for integration of long-standing residents

Kuwait's future requires strategic reforms for development: Al-Haifi

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: In a recent interview with Al-Seyassah, former Minister of Health, Dr. Mohammed Al-Haifi, provided an in-depth analysis of Kuwait's current governmental performance, emphasizing the need for strategic reforms to enhance citizens' welfare and national development.

Dr. Al-Haifi highlighted concerns regarding the govern-

ment's approach to revoking citizenship, particularly under Article 8, which pertains to individuals who have acquired Kuwaiti nationality through fraudulent means.

He noted that many affected individuals are long-standing residents, including mothers and grandmothers who have lived in Kuwait for decades and contributed significantly to society.

He advocated for a reassessment of these decisions, suggesting that descendants of such individuals, especially

those of the third and fourth generations who have clean criminal records and have positively contributed to society, should be considered for citizenship under Articles 5 or 7. This approach aims to integrate valuable members into Kuwaiti society rather than alienate them.

Describing the current governmental performance as "modest," Dr. Al-Haifi called for the establishment of specialized ministerial committees dedicated to improving citizens' living conditions and advancing the education system.

He emphasized the necessity for a comprehensive government work program that operates with a different dynamic than previous administrations, taking into account budgetary constraints and advocating for flexibility in law implementation to foster trust and respect among citizens.

Addressing recent decisions to halt the "Afiya" health insurance project for retirees and health insurance for 11 other government agencies, Dr. Al-Haifi defended Kuwait's health system as one of the best globally.

'Legal review needed to speed up tenders'

Proposal seeks faster project execution

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Municipal Council member Munira Al-Amir submitted a proposal to ensure that all tenders, practices, auctions, and similar transactions be reviewed by the legal department of the municipality before being submitted to the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) in preparation for their launch.



Al-Amir

In the preamble of her proposal, Al-Amir explained that the Municipal Council regularly presents several proposals aimed at improving work mechanisms and developing the services provided by the municipality, as well as addressing procedural problems in the municipality.

Despite in-depth discussions and thorough studies of the proposals by the Municipal Council and their official approval, it is surprising that these proposals are often not implemented. This delay can be attributed to factors such as the short time between the

decision and the launch of a tender or practice, or other reasons. As a result, projects are delayed, which prevents the desired benefits from being realized. This creates a misleading impression in the public that progress is not being made, and that there is no hope of solving the problems discussed by the Municipal Council, which is far from the truth.

Al-Amir revealed that when she followed up on many decisions based on the proposals she submitted, such as those aimed at improving city cleanliness and revising the mechanisms for submitting tenders and re-dividing the areas in its contracts, she observed that there is a high likelihood these proposals will not be applied to the new tenders due to the reasons she mentioned. Furthermore, no intermediate mechanisms or exceptional approaches have been established to deal with the delay until these decisions are fully implemented.

Al-Amir explained her proposal, which calls for a comprehensive review by the legal department of all tenders, practices, and auctions presented by the municipality. This review would ensure that they are in line with both current and new decisions of the Municipal Council and guarantee their implementation.

She concluded by affirming that her proposal aims to ensure the rapid execution of decisions without any delays for any reason, which would enable the public to witness the efforts of government institutions in a timely manner and contribute to a qualitative shift in the speed of implementing development and service projects.

Recognizing talent, innovation and impact

'Sheraa' Award honors Kuwaiti media excellence

By Mohammad Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff



Chairman of the Higher Committee of the Kuwait Media Award 'Sheraa' Saad Al-Ali, during the press conference for the Sheraa Award.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Saad Al-Ali, Chairman of the Higher Committee of Kuwait Media Award 'Sheraa', said the annual award aims to honor the outstanding contributions of Kuwaiti media professionals who played a pivotal role in establishing Kuwait's position as a beacon of media excellence in the Arab world; while enhancing the spirit of creativity and innovation in the Kuwaiti media sector, creating a competitive environment that boosts quality and professionalism, and underlining the pivotal role of the media in shaping public opinion and supporting societal issues.

Al-Ali made the statement in a press conference at the Ministry of Information on Tuesday.

It can be recalled that last week, Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi stated that "Kuwait has always been a pioneer in the Arab media scene, as it has promoted creativity, freedom of expression and media integrity."

Al-Ali pointed out as well that Kuwait proudly bears the title 'Arab Capital of Culture and Media' this year. "We honor talents and draw attention to media achievements that tell the story of Kuwait to the world. The 'Sheraa' Award reflects our appreciation for the great influence of the media in shaping visions, improving dialogue and driving development," he explained.

He disclosed the award will be granted in 16 media fields, while the collective awards include seven fields. He said the committee will nominate the media personality of the year and the evaluation will be based on the overall work of the personality and his positive impact on the Kuwaiti media scene.

He added this is an annual award whose objectives are to encourage excellence in media and journalism, affirm Kuwait's commitment to promote innovation and creativity, and honor individuals who contribute to enriching the vibrant media landscape.

886 cars removed, 1,459 citations issued

Mubarak Al-Kabeer cracks down on violations

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The General Cleaning and Road Occupancy Department of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Municipality reported significant achievements in combating violations during the past year.

Their efforts led to the removal of 886 abandoned and scrap cars, which were sent to the municipality's impoundment site.

Additionally, the inspectors placed 8,394 stickers on abandoned vehicles, issued pledges and warnings, and removed tons of waste in all its forms.

The department also issued 1,459 citations related to public cleanliness and road occupations, and processed 56 new licenses and renewed 87.

Gathering set for May 18-19

Kuwait to host 3rd conference on Public-Private Sector Partnership

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Chair of the Federation of Kuwait Federation of Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses (KFECH) Eng. Bader Al-Salman announced the upcoming 3rd Kuwait Conference on Public-Private Sector Partnership, which will be held with the cooperation of the Partnership Projects Authority and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA).

According to a press release issued by KFECH, the conference, titled "Partnership Projects: A Promising Start in the New Era", will take place on May 18-19 at the Badriya Hall in the Jumeirah Messilah Hotel.

Regarding the event, Eng. Al-Salman said, "With the launch of the new era, the State of Kuwait has witnessed a clear governmental push towards expanding the adoption of partnerships in implementing development projects".

He stressed the keenness of the federation to lead, guide, and support the Kuwaiti private sector in playing a vital role in shaping, developing, and executing Kuwait's development plans, and ensuring the thoughtful integration of public and private sector institutions to achieve Kuwait's sustainable development goals.

Al-Salman expressed his hope that the conference would play a key role in establishing the right foundations and completing the necessary procedures to support the state's direction in all legislative, regulatory, and financial aspects.

Meanwhile, head of the conference's scientific committee Dr. Khaled Mahdi said the Third Conference on Public-Private Partnership includes a comprehensive program with the participation of prominent international and regional

leaders, including heads of partnership departments from the United Nations, Egypt, Turkey, the Sultanate of Oman, Jordan, and Kuwait.

He highlighted the special participation of the head of the World Organization of Public-Private Partnership Units and Professionals and Vice-Chairman of the United Nations Task Force on Public-Private Partnerships Dr. Ziad Hayek.

Dr. Mahdi explained that the conference aims to establish a clear action plan for the role of partnership projects in supporting the implementation of development projects according to the New Kuwait 2035 vision. It serves as a platform to review major government projects, explore modern strategies, and benefit from advanced technologies to enhance sustainable development, as well as attract both global and local investments.

The conference will focus on discussing executive and legislative challenges, improving governance procedures, and comparing the Kuwaiti experience with international best practices to come up with practical recommendations.

It is being held with the cooperation of the Public-Private Partnership Projects Authority and the Saudi Direct Investment Promotion Authority, and with participation from both public and private sector institutions and regulatory bodies involved in partnership projects.

Al-Yaqout and Al-Fawzan Law Group, along with its partner LexisNexis, are serving as the scientific partners for the event. Razen Exhibitions and Conferences Management Company is organizing the conference for the third consecutive year.



Eng. Al-Salman



Dr. Al-Mahdi

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Hawalli Municipal Council to tackle key urban proposals in 7th session

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Hawalli Governorate Committee of the Municipal Council will hold its seventh meeting of the third session, chaired by Nasser Al-Jadaan, to deliberate on several urban development and infrastructure proposals.

Among the key agenda items is a request from the Environmental Public Authority to introduce a coffee shop within the Environmental Pollutants Building in Salmiya, Block 1, exclusively for workers in the facility.

The Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy has also submitted a request to allocate a site for a secondary transformer station (No. 1) in Jabriya, Block 10, to enhance power distribution in the area.

Additionally, the Amiri Diwan has requested the deduction of 1,161 square meters from the Hind Intermediate School for

Girls in Jabriya -- reducing its total area from 27,613.2 square meters to 26,452.2 square meters -- for security considerations.

Kuwaiti Society for the Development of the Educational System committee will review the organization's request to utilize unused vacant land in Salmiya as its headquarters.

Chairman Nasser Al-Jadaan has proposed constructing a pedestrian bridge on Al-Taawun Street to facilitate safe crossings between the Salwa and Anjafa Beach areas.

The committee will examine the executive body's response to Al-Jadaan's inquiry regarding private schools in Salwa.

The meeting is expected to address pressing urban planning needs, security considerations and infrastructure improvements in Hawalli Governorate, reflecting the Municipal Council's ongoing efforts to enhance public services and urban development.

Nat'l Industries Pride Festival boosts Kuwait's industrial standing: Al-Ajeel

Sheikha Amthal praises collaboration for sustainable growth

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5, (KUNA): Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ajeel said that the second National Industries Pride Festival represents an important platform to promote national products and highlight their high quality, which contributes to enhancing Kuwait's industrial status.

Minister Al-Ajeel stressed in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) during the opening of the festival the importance of supporting and encouraging national industries by organizing events and festivals that highlight the achievements of local companies.

He praised the efforts of all the parties organizing the festival, which is held in cooperation between the



KUNA photo Minister of Commerce and Industry and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry during their tour of the opening of the Second National Industries Pride Festival in Mubarakia Market.

Voluntary Work Center, Kuwait Municipality, and the Mubarakia Market

mittee. For her part, Head of the Voluntary Work Center, Sheikha Amthal

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber AlSabah, said in a similar statement to KUNA that the center seeks through this festival to support Kuwait's vision of highlighting the capabilities of the local industrial sector.

Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad affirmed that the first edition of the festival, which coincided with the Gulf Cup (Gulf Zain 26), achieved great success and was well received by all, which encouraged expanded participation in the second edition.

She expressed her hope that this event would contribute to enhancing consumer confidence in national products and strengthening cooperation between the public and private sectors to achieve sustainable economic development.

It is worth noting that the festival is being held at the Mubarakia Market, with the participation of 16 leading Kuwaiti companies from various local industries, in addition to Kuwait Oil Company and Kuwait Airways, which are presenting special offers to visitors.



KUNA photo Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah held talks with his Omani counterpart Hamoud Al Busaidi over efforts to bolster security cooperation.

Kuwait and Oman forge path toward stronger security ties

MUSCAT, Feb 5, (KUNA): Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Al-Sabah held talks on Wednesday with his Omani counterpart Hamoud Al Busaidi over efforts to bolster security cooperation between the Gulf Arab neighbors.

Praising the "depth" of bilateral relations with Muscat, a Kuwaiti interior ministry statement highlighted that security cooperation with the Gulf Arab Sultanate has

made exemplary progress, while the Omani interior minister cited their "common views" on security-related matters.

Amid his official state visit to the Gulf Arab Sultanate, the Kuwaiti interior minister held similar talks with Muscat's Deputy Prime Minister for Defense Affairs Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, which also focused on efforts to propel security relations to greater levels, added the statement.



The 19th plane from the Kuwaiti air bridge arrives at Damascus International Airport.

Kuwait's 19th relief bridge lands in Syria, delivering 10 tons of supplies

DAMASCUS, Feb 5, (KUNA): The 19th relief plane from the Kuwaiti air bridge arrived at Damascus International Airport on Wednesday, carrying 10 tons of food and shelter aid. The aid was organized by the Peace Society for Humanitarian and Charitable Works in cooperation with the Ministries of Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Defense, represented by the Kuwaiti Air Force.

The "Kuwait by Your Side" campaign continues its humanitarian efforts by supporting and assisting our Syrian brothers through the Kuwaiti air bridge with various forms of aid. This includes food such as flour, dates, rice, and oils, as well as shelter supplies like blankets, heavy clothing, gloves, and medical supplies for children and mothers. In addition, wheelchairs for people with disabilities and ambulances are also part of the aid.

The Kuwaiti aid is received at Damascus International Airport by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, which sorts and loads the materials onto its trucks and sends them to warehouses. Some aid is sent directly to the concerned parties, such as wheelchairs and ambulances to the Syrian Ministry of Health, and flour, which is sent directly to automated mills due to the increased demand for it.

The total aid provided to Syria via the Kuwaiti air bridge



KUNA photos Syrian Red Crescent members transfer Kuwaiti aid to their trucks.

to date has reached 535 tons, distributed among Kuwaiti associations, bodies, and official entities.

Municipal Council's Al-Farsi demands transparency on cleaning operations

By Inaas Awadh

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Municipal Council member Alia Al-Farsi yesterday raised a question to the executive body regarding cleaning efforts in cities, suburbs, and residential areas.

In the introduction to her inquiry, she highlighted the Municipal Council's role in the cleanliness efforts for these areas, which resulted in the updating and development of regulations on cleanliness and waste disposal.

Al-Farsi said, "So far, no noticeable progress has been made in cleaning efforts for cities, suburbs, and residential areas. We are still seeing garbage bags discarded next to containers. It is expected that waste be placed in

environmentally friendly bags, tightly sealed, and disposed of within a designated time frame for proper removal by the executive body. Such illegal behavior not only creates an unsightly and uncivilized environment but also contributes to environmental pollution and the spread of rats and insects."

She called on the municipality to respond to several questions, including the one about the way it issues warnings and fines for homeowners who fail to adhere to the specified

guidelines for waste removal and disposal in tightly sealed bags inside the containers.

Al-Farsi asked whether there are designated cleaners for each area, such as Rawda area, and requested information on the number of cleaners assigned during the day, including their working hours and the tasks required of them.

In addition, she asked the municipality about the status of the tender on performance level agreements related to general city cleaning. She requested details on the executive progress of the new cleaning contracts. She specifically asked for at least six important developments in the new contracts.

Al-Farsi also asked about the expected timeframes for the performance level agreement for city cleaning.

Illegal passenger

Driving a vehicle that produces loud noises, heavy smoke, or unpleasant odors, or is carrying a load that is not properly secured, will result in a KD 75 fine. If the matter is taken to court, the penalty could include imprisonment for up to three months, and/or a fine ranging between KD 150 and KD 300.

Driving or parking vehicles on the sidewalks or pedestrian-only areas is punishable by a fine of KD 30. If the case is referred to court, the fine imposed will range between KD 50 and KD 100.

Courts show

The Criminal Court sentenced the former head of the secret printing press at the Ministry of Education, along with an employee and a teacher, to three years in prison.

They were convicted of leaking high school exam papers for the 2023-2024 academic year, disclosing confidential information, and money laundering. This follows previous sentences of up to ten years for other individuals involved in similar offenses.

In response to these incidents, the

Ministry of Education has implemented significant reforms to enhance the integrity of the examination process.

This includes the formation of a new committee for the Central Secure Printing Press, responsible for printing high school exams, and the cancellation of appointments for members found in violation of regulations.

The ministry is also reassigning new personnel under strict selection criteria and printing new versions of compromised exams. These developments underscore Kuwait's commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring the integrity of its public institutions.

Strong winds,

He urged caution on highways due to poor visibility and advised postponing marine activities due to rough seas. Al-Ali also recommended wearing masks to protect against dust and high humidity, which could worsen allergy and asthma symptoms in coastal areas. (KUNA)

New Defense

Minister Al-Sabah affirmed his determination to provide an adequate working environment for all ministry

personnel to contribute to better readiness and performance.

The Ministry of Defense issued a statement after the Minister met with army top officials. The next stage requires intensified efforts and teamwork, stated Al-Sabah underlining necessity of cooperation and coordination between military and civilian bodies.

He hailed the work of First Deputy PM and Interior Minister Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah when he was serving in office.

Attending the meeting were Ministry Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Meshal Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of Army Staff Sabah Jaber Al-Sabah, and other officials. (KUNA)

Premarital health

a Kuwaiti and a non-Kuwaiti, or two non-Kuwaitis.

Integration of Digital Applications -- To streamline the process, digital applications will be utilized to facilitate certain procedures related to premarital medical examinations.

These changes reflect Kuwait's commitment to improving public health and ensuring the well-being of its citizens through proactive medical assessments for those entering marriage.

Lifesaving aid to Gaza, Syria and Sudan

Kuwait sent over 50 relief flights since October '23 under 'Fazaa for Palestine'

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti Union of Charitable Societies and Foundations announced on Wednesday that Kuwait has sent more than 50 relief flights since October 2023 as part of the "Fazaa for Palestine" campaign, carrying medical, food, and shelter aid.

Additionally, three relief ships loaded with thousands of tons of essential supplies were dispatched to Gaza, alongside Kuwait's continued humanitarian efforts in Syria and Sudan.

Speaking at a press conference to highlight Kuwait's relief efforts, Union Chairman Saad Al-Otaibi stated that over 23 Kuwaiti charitable societies participated in the campaign, affirming that the relief planes "did not only carry humanitarian aid but also messages of solidarity from the Kuwaiti people to the people of Gaza, reaffirming Kuwait's unwavering support."

Al-Otaibi added that Kuwait's humanitarian efforts included sending the first relief ship in March 2024 from Turkey, carrying 200 tons of essential food supplies, followed by a second Gaza-bound ship in April 2024 with 1,000 additional tons, and a third ship in August 2024 carrying 1,600 tons of food parcels and health supplies.

He noted that Kuwaiti trucks also crossed Jordanian territory carrying hundreds of tons of medical and relief supplies to reach Gaza, in continued efforts to provide necessities for affected residents.

Al-Otaibi emphasized that the aid was not limited to food and medical supplies; Kuwaiti medical teams, including consultants and surgeons, also entered Gaza through the Rafah crossing to provide healthcare services for the wounded and sick amid the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

On Syria, Al-Otaibi affirmed that Kuwait was among the first countries to provide humanitarian assistance, hosting four international donor conferences and mobilizing global support for Syrian refugees.

Kuwaiti charities have so far operated over 19 relief flights, transporting thousands of tons of aid to affected communities via Damascus, Beirut, and Amman airports.

Regarding Sudan, Al-Otaibi highlighted that Kuwait was among the earliest nations to respond, launching an air bridge carrying hundreds of tons of food and relief supplies, in addition to dispatching five ambulances to support emergency medical efforts.

Further, Al-Otaibi stressed that the Kuwaiti Union of Charitable Societies and Foundations acts as a coordinating umbrella for charities and relief organizations, ensuring



KUNA photo Press conference to announce the relief and humanitarian efforts made by the State of Kuwait.

synergy and maximum efficiency in delivering assistance to beneficiaries worldwide.

"Kuwait is not just a donor country; it is a role model for global humanitarian work. It embodies all values of mercy and solidarity by standing with vulnerable populations in their most challenging times," he added.

For his part, Ministry of Social Affairs representative Salim Al-Mutairi stated at the conference that Kuwaiti charitable organizations have proven their capability in responding swiftly to crises and delivering immediate relief.

He emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships between official and private entities to ensure aid reaches the maximum number of beneficiaries.

He further highlighted that the work of charities extends beyond emergency relief, as they actively support development projects that ensure long-term assistance for affected communities.

Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub commended Kuwait's distinguished role in supporting the Palestinian people, affirming that Kuwait was "at the forefront of nations that rushed to aid Gaza," utilizing its air bridge and mobilizing its charities and institutions to assist those in need.

He also expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Defense and the Kuwaiti Air Force for operating over 50 planes carrying humanitarian relief, reflecting Kuwait's steadfast stance in supporting the Palestinian cause.

A list of the debtor's temporary debts :

- 1) Promix Sanitary Ware Company LLC
- 2) Ayad Faraj Ayed Al-Dehani
- 3) Awatif Fuhaid Haras Al-Mutairi

Pursuant to the decision of the Honorable Bankruptcy Judge in case/request No. 96 / 2022 for declaring bankruptcy, issued on 28 / 12 / 2023, and registered under automated number 224383880 at the Bankruptcy Department. The decision ruled to initiate bankruptcy proceedings for the following:

1. Promix Company for Sanitary Ware W.L.L.
2. Ayad Faraj Ayed Al-Dehani
3. Awatif Fhed Hras Al-Mutairi

The court set 1 / 7 / 2019 as the provisional date of ceasing payments and appointed Dr. Faleh Al-Azmi as the bankruptcy trustee. The decision was published and announced in the Official Gazette «Kuwait Al-Youm» on 21 / 1 / 2024, issue No. 1671, and the concerned parties were notified.

A ruling declaring the bankruptcy of the debtor was issued on 20 / 5 / 2024 in the case filed by Hassan Abdullah Al-Enezi against Promix Company and others, according to a certificate dated 7 / 1 / 2025 from the Court of Appeals confirming no appeal was filed.

The bankruptcy trustee, Dr. Faleh Al-Azmi, commenced his duties by inviting creditors to submit their claims. After completing the debt verification process based on the responses received from some creditors, this list was prepared to include the amounts deemed acceptable by the bankruptcy trustee as follows:

Serial No.	Creditor Name	Debt Type	Debt Instrument	Claim Amount
1	Mubarak Sant Daban Al-Dehani	Commercial	Final Court Judgment (Execution)	572,171.209 KWD
2	National Bank of Kuwait (NBK)	Commercial	Final Court Judgment (Execution)	1,804,769.623 KWD
3	Hassan Abdullah Obaid Al-Enezi	Commercial (Cheques)	Final Court Judgment (Execution)	96,700 KWD
4	Nasser Bandar Al-Mutairi	Commercial	Two Final Court Judgments (Execution)	140,000 KWD
Total	Two million, six hundred thirteen thousand, six hundred forty Kuwaiti Dinars and eight hundred thirty-two fils.			2,613,640.832 KWD

The total debts submitted to us by the creditors amount to 2,613,640.832 KWD (Two million six hundred thirteen thousand six hundred forty Kuwaiti Dinars and eight hundred thirty-two fils). It is noted that some claims include the values of cheques against the debtor, which are listed as part of the execution files.

Note: According to Article (111) of Law No. 71 of 2020 issuing the Bankruptcy Law:

«The debtor and any creditor, even if their name is not included in the list of debts, may object to the Bankruptcy Administration regarding the debts listed in the schedule within ten days from the date of announcing the list. The Bankruptcy Court shall have jurisdiction to decide on this objection.»

Bankruptcy Trustee: Dr. Faleh Al-Azmi
Trustee Address: Kuwait – Qibla – Block (11) – Plot (18) – Munira Hamoud Al-Omairi Building – Floor (1) – Office (6)
Phone: 00965 / 22442424 – 99105903 – 51530012
Email: Mgc_consulting@yahoo.com

We appreciate your kind attention and respect.
Bankruptcy Trustee Dr. Faleh Al-Azmi

INTERNATIONAL



US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-NY, (center), is joined from left by Sen Patty Murray, D-Wash, Sen Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass, Sen Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii and Sen Ron Wyden, D-Ore, ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, as they speak about the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, during a news conference at the Capitol in Washington on Feb 3. (AP)

US Democrats confront limits of power in bid to stop President Trump, Musk

WASHINGTON, Feb 5, (AP) — Outraged Democrats are testing the limits of their diminished power as they try to stop the stunning power grabs of President Donald Trump and his chief lieutenant, Elon Musk.

The tech billionaire's maneuvers, which include the hostile seizure of taxpayer data and the apparent closure of the government's leading international humanitarian aid agency, have riled many Democrats, who have been mired in a post-election funk and struggled to identify a cohesive strategy in the earliest days of Trump's presidency.

Democratic members of Congress threatened to try to bring Trump's agenda, including his Cabinet nominations, to a grinding halt. Operatives assembled a new war room in their party headquarters. And Democratic protesters, backed by a sudden influx of elected officials, warned of a looming constitutional crisis at ballooning rallies across the nation's capital.

"With one voice, we can push back and resist the excesses and extremes of the Trump administration," newly elected Democratic National Committee Chair Ken Martin said in an interview. "Only two weeks in, Elon Musk is already our worst president ever."

It's unclear, however, if such attempts at obstruction would realistically stop Trump and Musk.

Republicans control the White House and both chambers of Congress, while the Supreme Court is led by a 6-3 conservative majority. And Republicans who control Congress, so far at least, have cheered Trump and Musk's provocative moves.

Vice President JD Vance on Tuesday shared one of the billionaire's social media posts in which he claimed to have discovered roughly \$700 billion in government fraud.

"When Elon and the team started I was very supportive but thought the waste and fraud would top out at \$250 billion," Vance wrote. "The real number will end up much higher."

Musk, the world's wealthiest person, oversees a team of people at the Department of Government Efficiency in Washington. With Trump's blessing, the billionaire CEO is moving to fire or sideline career government officials, gain access to sensitive databases and dismantle agencies he disfavors.

On Monday, some of Musk's agents were spotted at the Department of Education, which Trump has vowed to abolish. And on Tuesday, Musk called for National Public Radio to be

stripped of federal funding. None of it is happening without congressional approval, inviting a constitutional clash over the limits of presidential authority.

Democratic activists want their elected officials to do more.

More than 1,000 protesters gathered outside the Department of Treasury building in downtown Washington on Tuesday evening. Their chants of "Elon Musk has got to go!" echoed off the building's marble columns as more than two dozen House and Senate Democrats lined up to speak.

It was the same building where Musk's team last week gained access to the U.S. Treasury payment system. The system is responsible for 1 billion payments per year totaling \$5 trillion and includes sensitive information involving bank accounts and Social Security payments.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer tried to lead a chant of, "We will win." He was quickly drowned out by chants of, "Shut down the Senate!"

Another protest speaker, Rep. Jasmine Crockett, D-Texas, said in an interview that no elected Democrat should help Republicans govern in the GOP-controlled House, even if that leads to a government shutdown.

US Senate confirms Pam Bondi as attorney general

WASHINGTON, Feb 5, (AP) — The Senate confirmed Pam Bondi as US attorney general Tuesday evening, putting a longtime ally of Donald Trump at the helm of a Justice Department that has already been rattled by the firings of career employees seen as disloyal to the Republican president.



Bondi

The vote fell almost entirely along party lines, with only Sen. John Fetterman, a Pennsylvania Democrat, joining with all Republicans to pass her confirmation 54-46.

Bondi, a former Florida attorney general and corporate lobbyist, is expected to oversee a radical reshaping of the department that has been the target of Trump's ire over the criminal cases it brought against him. She enters with the FBI, which she will oversee, in turmoil over the scrutiny of agents involved in investigations related to the

president, who has made clear his desire to seek revenge on his perceived adversaries.

Republicans have praised Bondi as a highly qualified leader they contend will bring much-needed change to a department they believe unfairly pursued Trump through investigations resulting in two indictments.

"Pam Bondi has promised to get the department back to its core mission: prosecuting crime and protecting Americans from threats to their safety and their freedoms," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D.

But Bondi has faced intense scrutiny over her close relationship with the president, who during his term fired an FBI director who refused to pledge loyalty to him and forced out an attorney general who recused himself from the Justice Department's investigation into potential ties between Russia and his 2016 presidential campaign.

While Bondi has sought to reassure Democrats that politics would play no part in her decision-making, she also refused at her confirmation hearing last month to rule potential investigations into Trump's adversaries.

WH pulling almost all USAID workers off job worldwide

Trump announces withdrawal from UN human rights body

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 5, (AP) — US President Donald Trump announced Tuesday that the United States will withdraw from the top UN human rights body and will not resume funding for the UN agency helping Palestinian refugees.

The US left the Geneva-based Human Rights Council last year, and it stopped funding the agency assisting Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, after Israel accused it of harboring Hamas militants who participated in the surprise Oct. 7, 2023, attacks in southern Israel, which UNRWA denies.

Trump's announcement came on the day he met with visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose country has long accused both the rights body and UNRWA of bias against Israel and antisemitism.

Trump's executive orders also call for a review of American involvement in the Paris-based U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, known as UNESCO, and a review of US funding for the United Nations in light of "the wild disparities in levels of funding among different countries."

The United States, with the world's largest economy, pays 22% of the UN's regular operating budget, with



US President Donald Trump speaks to reporters as he signs executive orders in the Oval Office of the White House on Feb 5 in Washington. (AP)

China the second-largest contributor.

"I've always felt that the UN has tremendous potential," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. "It's not living up to that potential right now. ... They've got to get their act together."

He said the UN needs "to be fair to countries that deserve fairness," adding that there are some countries,

which he didn't name, that are "outliers, that are very bad and they're being almost preferred."

Before Trump's announcement, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric reiterated the Human Rights Council's importance and UNRWA's work in delivering "critical services to Palestinians."

Trump also pulled the US out of the Human Rights Council in June 2018.

His ambassador to the UN at the time, Nikki Haley, accused the council of "chronic bias against Israel" and pointed to what she said were human rights abusers among its members.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration said Tuesday that it is pulling almost all US Agency for International Development workers off the job and out of the field worldwide, moving to all but end a six-decade mission to shore up American security by fighting starvation, funding education and working to end epidemics.

The administration notified USAID workers in emails and a notice posted online, the latest in a steady dismantling of the aid agency by returning political appointees from President Donald Trump's first term and billionaire Elon Musk's government-efficiency teams who call much of the spending on programs overseas wasteful.

The order takes effect just before midnight Friday and gives direct hires of the agency overseas - many of whom have been frantically packing up households in expectation of lay-offs - 30 days to return home unless they are deemed essential. Contractors not determined to be essential also would be fired, the notice said.

Zelenskyy discloses troop losses

UK Foreign Secretary Lammy visits Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine, Feb 5, (AP) — UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy arrived in Kyiv on Wednesday, bringing a new support package for Ukraine a day after President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that more than 45,000 of his country's troops had died in the almost three-year war with Russia.

Lammy was due to announce 55 million pounds (\$69 million) in new support, including 3 million pounds to send Ukrainian grain to war-ravaged Syria through the World Food Program.

British officials say the goal is to replace grain Syria received from Russia when it was ruled by deposed President Bashar Assad, an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The U.K. says much of that grain was stolen

from Ukrainian land occupied by Russia's invading army.

Lammy is also pledging 17 million pounds to help repair Ukraine's energy system, which Russia has repeatedly pounded.

Lammy's trip followed last month's visit by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, when the U.K. and Ukrainian leaders signed what they called a "100-year partnership." It was part of a European show of support for Ukraine as the return of US President Donald Trump brought questions about continued backing for the country by Washington.

Meanwhile, Zelenskyy said in an interview broadcast Tuesday night that the war has killed 45,100 Ukrainian

troops. The fighting also has injured close to 390,000 troops, he told Piers Morgan Uncensored on YouTube.

In another development, the head of the UN Atomic Watchdog said Tuesday he will visit Moscow in the coming days to speak with officials about Russia's persistent attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure which threaten nuclear safety.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi also said there were "a few occasions where we had close calls" with regard to Europe's largest nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia which is under Russian occupation. Grossi did not condemn either side for attacks on the plant saying because it lay so close to the front line it was hard to determine responsibility.

More than half of Ukraine's power is generated by three functioning nuclear plants and Russia has increasingly threatened their ability to function.

Meanwhile, the Zaporizhzhia plant, which is not under Ukraine's control, in the southeast of the country, was occupied by Russia in the opening days of the full-scale invasion. It is one of the 10 biggest nuclear plants in the world. Grossi visited an electrical substation in the Kyiv region of Ukraine Tuesday and said that damage to such key power grid facilities during the war poses a threat to nuclear safety by potentially disrupting vital cooling procedures at atomic plants.

Russia has repeatedly tried to cripple Ukraine's power grid, denying the country heat, electricity and running water in an effort to break the Ukrainian spirit. The attacks have also sought to disrupt Ukraine's defense manufacturing industry.



Britain's Foreign Secretary David Lammy looks at damage on a Russian APC as he speaks with Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiha, in central Kyiv, Ukraine on Feb 5. (AP)

Sweden's worst mass shooting leaves 11 dead

OREBRO, Sweden, Feb 5, (AP) — Sweden's worst mass shooting left at least 11 people dead, including the gunman, and at least five seriously wounded at an adult education center west of Stockholm.

The gunman's motive hadn't been determined by early Wednesday as the Scandinavian nation - where gun violence at schools is very rare - reeled from an attack.

Officials said Wednesday that three women and two men, all with gunshot wounds, underwent surgery at Orebro University Hospital. All were in serious but stable condition after being admitted to the hospital with life-threatening injuries. Another woman was treated for minor injuries and was stable.

Jonas Claesson, regional director of health and medical services, said that two of the gunshot victims were in

intensive care Wednesday. All of the victims are over age 18, officials said. No other patients related to the shooting were admitted to Orebro University Hospital overnight.



Kristersson

The school, called Campus Risbergska, offers primary and secondary educational classes for adults age 20 and older, Swedish-language classes for immigrants, vocational training and programs for people with intellectual disabilities. The school is on the outskirts of Orebro, which is about 200 kilometers (125 miles) west of Stockholm.

Justice Minister Gunnar Ström-

mer called the shooting "an event that shakes our entire society to its core." King Carl XVI Gustaf and Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson ordered flags to be flown at half-staff at the Royal Palace and government buildings.

The king and Queen Silvia were in Orebro and would visit the school district and attend a memorial service in the city, the palace said. Kristersson and Strömmer would also be there. Soccer teams Degerfors IF and Orebro Syrianska will wear black armbands at a preseason match on Wednesday evening and hold a minute's silence before kickoff, Degerfors said.

The shooting started Tuesday afternoon after many students had gone home following a national exam. Students sheltered in nearby buildings, and other parts of the school were evacuated following the shooting.



Fire service rescuers arrive at the airport of the earthquake-hit island of Santorini, Greece, on Feb 5. (AP)

Quakes keep rattling Greece's Santorini every few minutes

Earthquakes rattled Greece's volcanic island of Santorini every few minutes through the night and into Wednesday as authorities bolstered their emergency plans in case the tremors are a harbinger of a larger quake to come.

Rescue crews with a sniffer dog and drones have been deployed on Santorini as a precaution since Sunday, while authorities have banned access to several coastal areas and ordered schools to shut for the week. Local authorities on several other

islands in the Cyclades also shut down schools, while public events on Santorini have been banned.

Thousands of residents and visitors have already left Santorini, frightened by the hundreds of earthquakes measuring between magnitude 3 and magnitude 5 that have struck the area since the weekend, with ferry lines and commercial airlines adding flights and ships to their schedules this week to accommodate the increased demand. However, ferry services were disrupted on Wednesday

due to rough weather. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis was to attend an emergency meeting at the Civil Protection Ministry in the capital, Athens, to discuss the situation later in the day.

The quakes, which all have epicenters beneath the seabed between Santorini and the nearby island of Amorgos, have so far caused no injuries or major damage, although limited rockslides and cracks in some older buildings have been reported on Santorini. (AP)

Poland can't get its money back after EU fined country's previous government

BRUSSELS, Feb 5, (AP) — Poland won't get its money back after a previous, conservative government was hit by a record-breaking fine by the European Union for ignoring a court order to undo changes to its judicial system, an EU high court said Wednesday.

According to the ruling, the EU's executive Commission was within its rights to withhold 320 million euros (\$332 million) from payments to Poland, after Warsaw refused to dismantle a judicial disciplinary chamber used to target judges who spoke out against the ruling Law and Justice party.

"In recovering the amounts payable, the commission did not infringe on EU law," the Luxembourg-based General Court said in a statement.

Poland in 2023 elected a pro-rule of law government headed by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, which has stepped



Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk addresses a media conference at the end of an EU summit in Brussels on Feb 3. (AP)

its cooperation with the Commission, but the objection to the fine had yet to

wind its way through the court. The EU and Poland now have especially tight relations since Poland is holding the EU's 6-month rotating presidency.

The European Commission launched infringement proceedings in 2019 as part of a long-running dispute between Brussels and the nationalist governments in Poland and Hungary over democratic standards and the rule of law in the 27-nation bloc.

Two years later, judges slapped a \$1.2 million a day fine on Poland after escalating tensions over judicial independence and the primacy of EU law. Weeks before, Poland's constitutional court ruled that Polish laws have supremacy over those of the European Union in areas where they clash.

Polish President Andrzej Duda backed down in 2022 after Brussels froze the disbursement of billions of euros in pandemic relief money.

Efforts to impeach may be hampered by lack of time

Philippine Vice President Duterte impeached by House, faces Senate trial

MANILA, Philippines, Feb 5, (AP): The lower house in the Philippines impeached Vice President Sara Duterte Wednesday, accusing her of a wide range of crimes that included plotting to assassinate the president, large-scale corruption and failing to strongly denounce China's aggressive actions against Filipino forces in the disputed South China Sea.

The move by legislators in the House of Representatives, many of them allies of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., deepens a bitter political rift that involved the two highest leaders of one of Asia's most rambunctious democracies.

Marcos has boosted defense ties with his country's treaty ally, the United States, while the vice president's father, Rodrigo Duterte, nurtured cozy relations with China and Russia during his stormy term that ended in 2022.

At least 215 legislators in the lower house signed the impeachment complaint against the vice president, significantly more than the required number to allow the petition to be rapidly transmitted to the Senate, which would serve as a tribunal to try the vice president,

House of Representatives Secretary-General Reginald Velasco told a plenary House meeting in the body's last session before a four-month recess.

Among the signatories of the impeachment complaint was the president's son, Rep. Sandro Marcos, and cousin, House Speaker Martin Romualdez. The petition urged the Senate to shift itself into an impeachment court to try the vice president, "render a judgement of conviction," remove her from office and ban her from holding public office.

"Duterte's conduct throughout her tenure clearly displays gross faithlessness against public trust and a tyrannical abuse of power that, taken together, showcases her gross unfitness to hold public office and her infidelity to the laws and the 1987 Constitution," the complaint said of Duterte.

The vice president didn't immediately comment on the House decision to impeach her, but her brother, Rep. Paolo Duterte said that the move was "a clear act of political persecution." Rival lawmakers maneuvered to quickly collect signatures and push a "baseless impeachment case" to the



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (center right) and Vice President Sara Duterte, daughter of former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte, raise hands during the inauguration ceremony at National Museum on June 30, 2022 in Manila, Philippines. (AP)

Senate, he said.

Duterte ran as Marcos's vice-presidential running mate in 2022 on a campaign battle cry of unity in a deeply

divided Southeast Asian country. Both were scions of strongmen long in the crosshairs of human rights groups, but their strong regional bases of support

combined to give them landslide victories.

Marcos is the son and namesake of the late dictator, who was ousted in a 1986 pro-democracy uprising. The vice president's father and Marcos's predecessor, Duterte, launched a deadly anti-drug crackdown that is being investigated by the International Criminal Court as a possible crime against humanity.

The whirlwind political alliance rapidly frayed after their electoral victories.

The impeachment complaint against the vice president, regarded as a possible presidential contender after Marcos's six-year term ends in 2028, focuses on a death threat that she made against the president, his wife and the House speaker last year, irregularities in the use of her office's intelligence funds and her failure to stand up to Chinese aggression in the disputed South China Sea.

She said in online news conference on Nov. 23 that she has contracted an assassin to kill Marcos, his wife and Romualdez if she were killed, a threat she warned wasn't a joke.

She later said that she wasn't threat-

ening him, but was expressing concern for her own safety. However, her statements set off an investigation and national security concerns.

Allegations of graft and corruption against her also emanated from a monthslong and televised House investigation on the alleged misuse of 612.5 million pesos (\$10.5 million) of confidential and intelligence funds received by Duterte's offices as vice president and education secretary. She has since left the education post after her political differences with Marcos deepened.

She has also been accused of unexplained wealth and failure to declare her wealth as required by the law. She has refused to respond to questions in detail in tense televised hearings last year.

The impeachment complaint accused Duterte of undermining the Marcos government's policies, including her description of the administration's handling of territorial disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea as a "fiasco." Duterte has repeatedly accused Marcos, his wife and Romualdez of corruption, weak leadership and attempting to muzzle her because of speculation she may seek the presidency in 2028.



People remove snow from a street in Kushiro, Hokkaido, Japan on Feb 5. (AP)

Parts of northern Japan have 4 feet of snow, more falling

Record-breaking snowfall fell on Japan's northern main island of Hokkaido, disrupting traffic, causing airport closures and delaying deliveries on Tuesday.

The Hokkaido prefectural government said record-breaking snowfall has been observed especially in the eastern regions of the island, including Obihiro and Kushiro, whose city offices received dozens of calls for help from drivers whose vehicles had stalled in the snow.

The heavy snow and traffic disruptions came just as a popular snow festival began in Sapporo in

southern Hokkaido, although the city did not face major disruptions.

Television footage showed residents shoveling snow and passengers pushing vehicles that got stuck. So far, no injuries or major damage have been reported.

In Obihiro, record-breaking snowfall of 129 centimeters (4 feet) was detected earlier Tuesday.

The Japan Meteorological Agency said two powerful low pressure systems are moving on both sides of the Japanese archipelago, sending cold air into the region.

The agency predicted up to 100

centimeters (3.2 feet) of snowfall in northwestern Japan and 50 centimeters (1.6 feet) more snowfall in Hokkaido over the next 24 hours through Wednesday evening.

The prefecture said parts of highways and main roads were closed, and train services in the affected areas were suspended. Runways were closed due to snow at Obihiro and Kushiro airports, while dozens of flights in and out of Hokkaido were cancelled, affecting thousands of people. About 370 schools canceled classes Tuesday across Hokkaido, according to the prefecture. (AP)



People collect the wreckage at the site of a traffic accident near the Ciawi Toll Gate in Bogor Regency, Indonesia on Feb 5. (Xinhua)

8 killed in traffic accident in Indonesia's West Java

Eight people were killed and 11 others were injured in a traffic accident in Indonesia's West Java province on Tuesday night, a senior official confirmed on Wednesday morning.

According to Desiana Kartika Bahari, head of the Jakarta search and rescue office, the accident occurred near the Ciawi Toll Gate in Bogor Regency just before midnight. She said the accident involved a truck that experienced brake failure, resulting in a collision with two cars at the tollgate and causing severe damage.

"The crash resulted in 19 victims - eight fatalities and 11 others with

serious or minor injuries. All victims were rushed to Ciawi General Hospital," she told Xinhua by phone.

Desiana noted that her team's primary tasks were to assist the victims, ensure their evacuation, and provide immediate support. "Our focus was to help the victims and confirm that all were safely evacuated," she added.

Bogor Regency Police Chief Eko Prasetyo said the accident occurred at 11:30 p.m. Jakarta time on Tuesday, damaging six vehicles. He confirmed that brake failure was the cause of the crash.

Meanwhile, an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.1 jolted Halmahera, Indonesia at 03:12:30 GMT on Wednesday, the GFZ German Research Center for Geosciences said.

The epicenter, with a depth of 111.0 km, was initially determined to be at 1.62 degrees north latitude and 127.21 degrees east longitude.

In another development, the local government of Bima regency on Sumbawa Island in Indonesia's West Nusa Tenggara province officially declared a disaster emergency status on Tuesday following flash floods and landslides. (Xinhua)

US freezes some funding for UN-backed mission to quell gangs in Haiti, UN says

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 5, (AP): The US has notified the United Nations that it is freezing some funding to a U.N.-backed mission in Haiti tasked with fighting gangs trying to seize full control of the country's capital, the UN said Tuesday.

The US has been the biggest contributor to the mission led by Kenyan police, which was launched last year and is struggling with a lack of funding and personnel. The change in funding will have an "immediate impact," UN spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said.

The move comes as US President Donald Trump has imposed a sweep-

ing freeze on foreign assistance, leading to thousands of US aid agency employees and contractors being laid off and programs worldwide shut down.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has offered a waiver for life-saving programs, but confusion over what is exempt from stop-work orders - and fear of losing US aid permanently - is still freezing aid and development work globally.

The United States had committed \$15 million to the trust fund that helps finance the multinational force in Haiti, Dujarric said. With \$1.7 million of that already spent, "\$13.3 million is

now frozen," he said.

"We will await further guidance from the U.S. regarding its contribution," the UN spokesman said.

The fund, which now has less than \$100 million of the estimated \$600 million required annually for the multinational force, is not the only U.S. support for the mission. Millions more US dollars have been contributed directly to operations and support.

On Jan. 29, the US State Department approved an aid freeze waiver for the mission for \$41 million and waiver requests for another more than \$30 million in assistance are pending, according to US officials. The funding that was halted appeared to take officials leading the Kenyan mission by surprise. When asked for comment, mission spokesman Jack Mbaka declined to give any immediate reaction.

The mission works alongside Haiti's National Police, which is severely underfunded and understaffed and has received millions of dollars from the US government in recent years to help fight gangs. Currently, there are only about 4,000 Haitian police officers on duty at a time in a country of more than 11 million people.

The announcement was made just hours after a military contingent of 70 soldiers from El Salvador arrived in Haiti, joining more than 600 Kenyan police officers already on the ground backed by police and soldiers from other countries including Jamaica and Guatemala.

Suu Kyi house fails to sell at auction

YANGON, Myanmar, Feb 5, (AP): A renewed attempt to auction off the family home of Myanmar's imprisoned former leader Aung San Suu Kyi was unsuccessful Wednesday as the prospect of paying tens of millions of dollars for a property in a country embroiled in a civil war failed to attract any bidders.

It was the third attempt to sell the lakeside property where Suu Kyi had been held under house arrest for nearly

15 years. It's widely viewed as a historical landmark of her non-violent struggle against military rule for which she won the Nobel Peace Prize.

In the previous attempt at auction last August, the court-ordered asking price was \$142 million; on Wednesday it was reduced by \$1 million, to \$141 million.

Suu Kyi's democratically elected government was ousted by the military in February 2021. She is now serving a combined 27-year sentence after being convicted of a string of criminal charges that supporters say have been fabricated to discredit her.

Since then, resistance to the military government has grown and the country is now in the midst of a brutal civil war.

The court-ordered auction followed a bitter decades-long legal dispute between Suu Kyi and her brother, Aung San Oo, who has sought an equal division of the property.



Police personnel redirect traffic near the international airport, before the arrival of a US military plane carrying deported Indian migrants, in Amritsar, India on Feb 5. (AP)

More than 100 Indian migrants deported by US arrive home

AMRITSAR, India, Feb 5, (AP): A U.S. military plane carrying 104 deported Indian migrants arrived in a northern Indian city on Wednesday, the first such flight to the country as part of a crackdown ordered by the Trump administration, airport officials said.

The Indians who returned home had illegally entered the United States over the years and came from various Indian states.

The move came ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Washington, which is expected next week. U.S. President Donald Trump and Modi discussed immigration in a phone call last week and Trump stressed the

importance of India buying more American-made security equipment and fair bilateral trade.

India has cooperated with the U.S. and said it is ready to accept the deported Indians after verification.

New Delhi says it is against illegal immigration, mainly because it is linked to several forms of organized crime, and it has not objected to the U.S. deporting its citizens.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said earlier this week the deportation flights were an effective way to stem the flow of illegal migration, which he said is destructive and destabilizing. The US government carries out deportations through commercial and chartered flights, he added.



People displaced by armed gang attacks take refuge in the town hall of the Kenscoff neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Feb 3. (AP)

Troops deployment along US border - Mexico prez

MEXICO CITY, Feb 5, (Xinhua): Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum confirmed on Tuesday that 10,000 National Guard troops have begun deployment along the 3,200-km border with the United States.

Bolstering border security was part of an agreement reached a day earlier with her US counterpart, Donald Trump, to combat fentanyl trafficking and curb illegal migration.

During her regular press conference, Sheinbaum said troops were being redistributed from areas with fewer security concerns to the border region, and the move "does not leave the rest of the country without security."

She said part of her negotiations with Trump was to create a working group to address security matters, adding that Trump pledged to "investigate the entry of high-powered weapons from the United States into Mexico."

Both sides must cooperate "so that arms trafficking decreases and drug trafficking decreases," she said.

As part of the agreement, Trump announced a one-month suspension of a planned 25-percent tariff on Mexican imports.



Migrants make their way to a Border Patrol van after crossing illegally and waiting to apply for asylum between two border walls separating Mexico and the United States, Tuesday, Jan. 21, 2025, in San Diego. (AP)

Extremist attacks won't end friendship with China, says Pakistan's President Zardari

BEIJING, Feb 5, (AP): Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari said Wednesday that his country's friendship with China has "gone through ups and downs" but it won't be broken down by extremist attacks that have killed Chinese nationals that have killed Chinese nationals.

"Pakistan and China will always be friends, all-weather friends," he said at the opening of talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping. "No matter how many terrorists, how many issues crop up in the world, I will stand, Pakistan people will stand with the people of China."

Thousands of Chinese workers work in Pakistan on road and other infrastructure projects under China's multi-

billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which aims to improve trade routes and deepen China's ties with the rest of the world.

Chinese workers have been among those targeted in attacks in recent years, including seven who died last year in two

separate attacks that raised renewed alarm in China.

Zardari arrived in China Tuesday on a four-day visit that will also take him

to the wintry northeastern city of Harbin for the opening ceremony of the 9th Asian Winter Games.

He said that many forces are trying to disturb the relationship between the two countries by launching attacks on "Chinese brothers."

Xi said that China and Pakistan have an enduring friendship and have set a model for relations between two countries by advancing the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and cooperation in various fields. A Chinese-funded \$230 million airport, the largest in Pakistan, started operations last month in the coastal city of Gwadar in Baluchistan province.



Zardari

Kuwaiti oil price drops to \$77.88 pb

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5, (KUNA): The Kuwaiti crude oil price dropped USD 1.53 during Tuesday's trading to reach USD 77.88 per barrel (pb), compared with USD 79.41 pb the day before, Kuwait

Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Wednesday. Brent futures rose by 24 cents to hit USD 76.20 pb and West Texas Intermediate (WTA) went up by 46 cents to USD 72.70 pb.

Business



Salma Al-Hajjaj and a number of bank officials in a group photo with the participants.

Bank aligns with Kuwait Vision 2035 to promote sustainability

Gulf Bank joins KFAS and IE Business School's 2024-'25 Innovation Program

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: As part of its commitment to developing national talent and building a strong foundation of young leaders, Gulf Bank participated in the Innovation Challenge Program for 2024-2025. Held annually by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) in partnership with the IE Business School, the program is designed to drive innovation and cultivate creative skills within private sector companies, fostering economic growth and advancing Kuwait's shift toward a knowledge-based economy.

Gulf Bank's team for this year's program included Mohammed Sahib Shokr, Senior Manager of the Anti-Money Laundering Unit; Ahd Abdulmoneim, Assistant Manager of Human Resources; Sarah Al-Abdulhadi, Assistant Manager of Financial Institutions & Sovereigns; and Hamad Boursli, Associate Manager of Credit Card Management.

Over three months, Gulf Bank's team embarked on a structured learning journey, tackling a real-world business challenge while applying cutting-edge methodologies in design thinking, business model innovation, and strategic problem-solving. Led by

KFAS, the multi-stage Innovation Challenge Program began in Kuwait and culminated in an immersive experience at IE Business School in Madrid – offering world-class mentorship and hands-on training in prototyping, pitching strategies, and customer-centric innovation. Through collaboration and expert guidance, the team refined innovative solutions to drive Gulf Bank's growth and operational excellence.

Gulf Bank is a key player in Kuwait's private and banking sectors, actively fostering innovation and developing exceptional national talent. This commitment aligns with the Bank's strategic focus on digital transformation, reinforcing its position as Kuwait's Bank of the Future. By delivering seamless, innovative services that enhance customer experiences and drive sustainable growth, Gulf Bank continues to invest in advanced technological solutions as a core pillar of its strategy.

As a leading private sector institution in Kuwait, Gulf Bank is committed to nurturing and supporting Kuwaiti talent throughout their careers. Recognizing its employees as its greatest asset, the Bank continuously invests in their growth by providing training

programs, ongoing learning opportunities, and professional challenges in collaboration with top local and international institutions. In addition to delivering exceptional banking products and services, Gulf Bank is dedicated to strengthening its workforce and promoting a culture of continuous learning and development.

Gulf Bank aims to be Kuwait's leading bank, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace to deliver exceptional customer service while contributing sustainably to the community. Through its extensive branch network and innovative digital services, the Bank empowers customers to conduct banking transactions conveniently and efficiently, ensuring a seamless experience.

In alignment with Kuwait Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," and its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships, Gulf Bank is dedicated to driving robust sustainability initiatives across environmental, social, and governance (ESG) dimensions. The Bank is committed to implementing strategically selected and diverse sustainability programs both internally and externally.

AAOIFI Sharia Standard 62 to shape future of sukuk market

By S&P Global Rating

Why It Matters

At the beginning of February, the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) held a couple of public hearings on Sharia Standard 62. In S&P Global Ratings' view, this standard will shape the future of the sukuk market. The AAOIFI has reiterated that the purpose of this standard is to standardize and harmonize the requirements for sukuk issuances, particularly in jurisdictions where regulators have adopted the AAOIFI's Sharia standards.

What's Happening

The AAOIFI will likely give issuers more time to implement Sharia Standard 62. In its public hearing over the weekend, the AAOIFI mentioned that it is likely to approve Standard 62 in 2025, and that issuers will likely have between one and three years to implement the new requirements, depending on the AAOIFI's final decision.

The AAOIFI also mentioned that the retroactive application of the standard to existing sukuk is unlikely. We have previously commented that a retroactive application might be challenging.

Changes to legal documents are generally subject to investors' consent, and, in our view, sukuk issuers are unlikely to obtain this consent if investors believe that they will be exposed to higher risks.

At the same time, we consider that sukuk issuers that are already under financial strain may use the adoption of Standard 62 as a reason to trigger the restructuring of their sukuk by declaring that they are not aligned with the new requirements.

However, this risk should be mitigated by the fact that the sukuk's legal documents generally have clauses that are designed to prevent the issuer from reneging on its contractual obligations on the basis of noncompliance with Sharia law.

Therefore, depending on the standard's final content, we do not expect a significant number of sukuk restructurings when the standard is adopted.

Sukuk structures could change. Depending on the final timeline that the AAOIFI gives the market, this development could give sukuk structures more time to develop structures that strike a balance between complying with the new requirements and making the sukuk attractive to fixed-income investors, if this is still possible.

It remains to be seen if there will be any major changes to the standard compared with the current draft. The AAOIFI mentioned in the public hearings that some previous sovereign sukuk used the usufruct as the underlying assets. This could mitigate the difficulty of registering such assets.

At the same time, if the assets are registered to the investors and the investors pay the registration fee, the sukuk may ultimately be seen as an asset-management product, whereby the sponsor acts as an originator and asset manager rather than as an obligor. This could expose investors to the sponsors' fiduciary risk rather than their credit risk, and may cause sukuk to morph away from being fixed-income instruments.

What Comes Next

The adoption of the standard could cause a decline in sukuk issuance. If adopted as proposed, Sharia Standard 62 will, in our view, result in the sukuk market shifting away from structures in which the sukuk sponsors' contractual obligations underpin their repayments, to structures in which the underlying assets have a more prominent role.

Notwithstanding the fact that issuers will have more time to adjust to the new requirements, investors will likely face new risks relating to asset performance and value.

We continue to believe that if the standard is adopted as proposed, some investors and issuers may choose alternatives to the sukuk market, as issuing sukuk might become more onerous from a risk/reward perspective. This could also encourage some adopters to transition away from the standards if their ability to tap the capital markets is significantly restricted.

Boursa Kuwait closes slightly lower

General Index falls 0.05%

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5, (KUNA): Boursa Kuwait closed Wednesday's session with a marginal decline, as the general index slipped 3.87 points (0.05%) to settle at 7,900.09 points.

A total of 658.5 million shares were traded across 22,755 transactions, amounting to KD 172.2 million (\$530.3 million).

The Main Market Index edged up 16.73 points (0.23%) to 7,291.60

points, with 425.3 million shares traded through 11,959 transactions, valued at KD 95.7 million (\$294.7 million).

Meanwhile, the Premier Market Index dropped 9.52 points (0.11%) to 8,442.90 points, as 206.18 million shares changed hands in 10,796 transactions, totaling KD 76.5 million (\$235.6 million).

The Major 50 Index saw a modest gain of 14.11 points (0.19%), closing at 7,307.44 points, with 385.6 million shares traded in 7,090 transactions, worth KD 87.3 million (\$268.8 million).

Investment diversification key to bank's financial strategy

Burgan Bank launches first Certificates of Deposit program in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Burgan Bank announced the establishment of a strategic USD 500 million Certificates of Deposit (CDs) program in Kuwait, rated 'F1' by Fitch Ratings which is equivalent of "A". This short-term debt instrument, spearheaded by the Bank's Treasury team, serves as a strategic mechanism for the bank to maintain a diversified source of liquidity, optimize the balance sheet and allow for sufficient access to funding.

The program has been established in coordination with Mizuho, as the Lead Arranger, whereas MUFG Bank, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), the Korea Development Bank (KDB), the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS), and Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) act as Dealers.

CDs are short term debt instruments with maturities up to one year. They are primarily popular with Asian investors and can be priced at fixed, floating or zero coupon (at a discount).

Mr. Tony Daher, Group Chief Executive Officer at Burgan Bank, commented "We are proud to introduce



Mr. Tony Daher, Group Chief Executive Officer at Burgan Bank.



Mr. Abdullah Marafie, General Manager of Treasury and Financial Institutions at Burgan Bank.

our new CD program and are pleased with the positive reception it has received. This program reinforces our commitment to achieving the strategy aimed at growth in both the local and regional markets. This program demonstrates our commitment to growth and strengthens our leading position in the domestic and regional markets."

Mr. Daher added: "In addition to strengthening our relationships in the global financial and investment markets, the inclusion of CD program to Burgan Bank's portfolio enables the bank to attract new segments of investors in the global market and enhances the bank's risk profile and resilience against market fluctuations."

Mr. Abdullah Marafie, General Manager of Treasury and Financial Institutions at Burgan Bank, added: "The launch of CD program aligns with the group's policies that aim to diversifying the sources of funding, which enhances liquidity stability and protects the bank from any financial shocks. This program will contribute to the bank's adherence to Basel III ratios including Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR), Loan to Deposit Ratio (LDR), and Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR)."

Mr. Marafie added: "The program has been carefully designed to expand Burgan Bank's presence in the region, particularly in Asian markets where short-term debt instruments are in high demand. Building relationships with foreign investors also helps to open broader horizons for securing long-term financing. In line with our commitment to meeting market needs, this program was developed based on comprehensive studies and research to ensure that our products align with our position as a trusted financial partner."

AMMAN, Feb 5, (KUNA): Jordan is making a significant step in transitioning from linear to circular economy, focusing on resource reuse, recycling, and regeneration.

This shift would support sustainable development, improve economic growth, and create job opportunities.

The Ministry of Environment described the circular economy as Jordan's "pivotal role" in mitigating environmental degradation through promoting green transformation, emphasizing waste reduction, lower greenhouse gas emission, and sustainable resource use.

"The circular economy is an integral component of Jordan's broader green economy agenda, pursued in collaboration with public and private sector stakeholders, as well as civil society institutions," the Ministry told to Jordan News Agency (Petra)

The government has incorporated circular economy concept into school curricula and developed the National Green Economy Action Plan (2021-2025), prioritizing six sectors: energy, water, waste management, agriculture, tourism, and transportation.

The plan aligns with climate action efforts, including Jordan's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under Paris Agreement.

To facilitate this transition, the ministry has licensed 183 waste management facilities, including eight for battery recycling, 12 for oil recycling and 12 for tire recycling. It also established 34 collection centers for electronic and electrical waste.

Jordan's Economic Modernization Vision (EMV) prioritizes the circular economy to drive economic expansion, generate employment, and ensure the preservation of natural and environmental resources.

A key focus of the EMV is the development of industrial eco-parks and the formulation of circular economy standards for industrial activities.

The private sector also embraced circular economy principles. The Jordan Strategy Forum (JSF) highlighted the need to move beyond waste management to full circular economy integration, especially in manufacturing, which is Jordan's largest industrial sector.

The industry is expected to double by 2033, creating nearly 260,000 jobs in chemicals, textiles, food production, pharmaceuticals, and engineering, given the sector's high energy and resource consumption, circular economy practices can boost efficiency and sustainability.

In line with this, Jordan launched in 2023 a project to implement cleaner production and resource efficiency practices in 15 industrial facilities where several companies developed circular solutions, such as converting waste into alternative fuel, recycling plastic and rubber waste.

Official data from the Ministry of Information showed that annually Jordan produces estimated 2.7 million tons of waste with municipal solid waste 2.5 million tons, 50 percent of which is organic matter.

The data revealed that medical waste generation stands at 2,745 tons per year, while hazardous industrial waste reaches 45,000 tons annually, while plastic waste constitutes nearly 35 percent of total waste output.

In a pioneering move, Jordan established its first Recycling Bank Center in Amman, which follows international best practices in commercial waste recycling.

Experts and industry leaders stressed that circular economy practices improve competitiveness, reduce costs, and improve Jordan's international reputation, especially as global demand rises for sustainable products.

In addition, they believe that this transformation will drive Jordan towards innovation, minimize waste, and ensure long-term environmental and economic benefits.



A group photo featuring members of Burgan's Executive Management with Mizuho's team at the signing ceremony.

Board proposes 35 fils per share dividend

stc reports KD 336.5 million revenue for 2024, up 2.8%

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc), a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced its financial results for the financial year ended 31 December 2024, highlighting the most significant achievements, financial and operational performance in addition to the social initiatives made by the company during 2024.

Commenting on the announcements of these results, Eng. Muataz Al-Dharrab, the company's CEO, stated: "Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc) has achieved a number of financial and operational milestones during the financial year ended December 31, 2024.

This reflects the company's commitment to achieving its strategic objectives and strengthening its position as a leader in the telecommunications and ICT market.

In line with the rapid developments in the sector and the growing demand for digital services, stc consistently strives to meet market needs by offering the latest comprehensive and integrated digital and technological solutions for both the individual and enterprise sectors.

Furthermore, stc is committed to making every effort to enhance its infrastructure, expand its product portfolio, and deliver top-notch services with the aim of enriching customer experience, increasing market share, and creating added value for its shareholders.

Driven by our digital transformation strategy and the increasing demand for digitization, we have refreshed our corporate strategy, "r.e.a.c.h.", during the year.

This strategy is intended to be implemented over the next three years and reflects stc's forward-looking vision. It aims to contribute to shaping the digital future, promote sustainable growth that benefits all stakeholders, and pave the way for achieving further milestones in the years to come in addition to enhancing profitability."

Commenting on the key achievements of stc during the financial year ended December 31, 2024, Eng. Muataz Al-Dharrab, said: "stc launched several projects, during the fourth quarter of 2024, targeting both the individual and enterprise sectors aimed at delivering an unparalleled experience to our customers.

- KD 336.5mn stc's revenues for the financial year ended 31 December 2024 with KD 31.4mn net profit
- Revenue increased by 2.8% to reach KD 336.5mn
- EBITDA increased by 0.3% to reach KD 85.3mn
- Net profit reached KD 31.4mn
- stc's customer base reached 2.3mn customers

The company has also adopted modern technologies to enhance the level of services in addition to effectively and innovatively meeting customer aspirations.

stc takes pride in receiving numerous prestigious awards that reflect its excellence and leadership in digital solutions and information technologies.

These awards highlight the company's advanced digital capabilities and its active role in supporting SMEs - Small and Medium Enterprises in achieving their digital transformation strategies.

In line with our strategic vision to deliver innovative services and platforms to our customers, enable digital transformation in Kuwait, and adapt to the rapid developments in the telecommunications and IT market, we have successfully launched a new dynamic and flexible operating model for stc and its subsidiaries.

This model aims to enhance the efficiency of our internal operations, enable us to make strategic investments, and seizing promising opportunities in the market more effectively."

Commenting on the announcement of the financial results as of December 31st of 2024, Aldharrab stated: "stc has achieved outstanding financial results



Eng. Muataz Al-Dharrab, CEO



stc Logo

during the financial year ended December 31st, 2024, with total revenue reaching KD 336.5mn by the end of December 2024 with a growth rate of 2.8% compared to KD 327.4mn in 2023.

The main reason for this growth is attributed to the increase in the Consumer sector revenues, which constitute 76% of total revenues.

Meanwhile, Business Sector revenues accounted for 24% of the company's total revenue during the financial year ended December 31, 2024. This is the result of efforts to enhance the company's business model, develop digital services, and provide integrated technological solutions for businesses across various sectors."

Aldharrab added: "These outcomes resulted in a growth of EBITDA by 0.3% to reach KD 85.3mn during the financial year ended December 31, 2024, compared to KD 85.1mn in 2023, supported by the increase in stc's revenue.

As for the net profit, it amounted to KD 31.4mn (EPS 331 Fils) in the financial year ended December 31, 2024, compared with KD 32.7mn (EPS 331 Fils) in 2023.

Despite the decrease in net profit, which is primarily attributed to the financial impact of the early retirement plan, this strategic initiative reflects our commitment to optimizing operations while recognizing the valuable contributions of stc employees.

Excluding the non-recurring expenses related to the early retirement plan, the net profit for 2024 amounts to approximately KD 33.3 mn, achieving a growth rate of 1.8% compared to 2023.

These results, along with the continued focus on efficiency and innovation, highlight stc's ability to enhance profitability and achieve sustainable growth.

It is worth noting that stc's customer base reached approximately 2.3 million customers by the end of December 2024, reflecting the ongoing success in attracting more customers and providing high-quality services."

Commenting on the company's financial position as of December 31, 2024, Dr. Abdulrahman stated: "The company's total assets amounted to KD 462.2 mn at the end of December 2024, while

total shareholders' equity reached KD 240.5mn. Additionally, the company has a strong solvency position among telecommunications companies in the Middle East.

The Board of Directors has recommended distributing cash dividends to shareholders at 35 fils per share, representing 35% of the nominal value of the share for the year 2024.

This recommendation is subject to the approval of the company's Annual General Meeting. This decision reflects stc's confidence in the progress of its business, the strength of its financial position, and the robustness of its cash flows."

In 2024, stc issued its first standalone Sustainability Report, demonstrating our unwavering commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility.

Throughout the year, we launched a series of initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable resource management, enhancing transparency, and raising awareness about the importance of sustainability and its impact on the company and society.

Our commitment to sustainability extends to integrating environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards into all our operations, contributing to Kuwait's Vision 2035, "New Kuwait," for a sustainable future, and driving positive change in alignment with national and global sustainable development goals."

Aldharrab also emphasized: "Recognizing the importance of defining a financial strategy to achieve success and sustainability, stc is committed to periodically reviewing and updating its financial strategy to align with the company's ambitious strategic projects. Accordingly, the efficiency of stc's financial strategy contributes to achieving its vision, diversifying investments, and managing its financial resources effectively, which strengthens its leadership position in the telecommunications sector, ensures meeting customer needs, and delivers added value to shareholders.

stc is also committed to regularly reviewing the company's key performance indicators alongside successfully executing its projects, supported by digital solutions and its long-term plans.

These efforts align with the company's strategic and financial objectives, contributing to enhanced operational efficiency and the implementation of best governance practices to ensure operational sustainability and achieve excellence."

The financial results for the financial year ended 31 December 2024

Revenues	KD 336.5 mn
EBITDA	KD 85.3 mn
Net Profit	KD 31.4 mn
Earnings per share	31 Kuwaiti fils
Assets	KD 462.2 mn
Shareholders' equity	KD 240.5 mn
Book value per share	241 fils per share
Customer base	2.3 mn customers

US foreign aid cuts spark mixed reactions in Iran

Iran's currency hits record low despite US pressure campaign

TEHRAN, Feb 5, (AP) - Iran's currency plunged Wednesday to a record low of 850,000 rials to \$1 after U.S. President Donald Trump ordered a restart to the "maximum pressure" campaign targeting Tehran.

Trump's order, signed Tuesday night, calls for halting Iran's oil exports and pursuing a "snapback" of United Nations sanctions on Iran. However, he also suggested he didn't want to impose those sanctions and wanted to reach a deal with Iran.

The move comes as Trump's moves to freeze spending on foreign aid and overhaul, or even end, the U.S. Agency for International Development have been lauded in Iranian state media.

Iranian officials appear to be signaling that they are waiting for a message from Trump on whether he wants to negotiate over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program. At stake are potentially billions of dollars withheld from Iran through crushing sanctions and the future of a program on the precipice of enriching weapons-grade uranium.

Iran's government seems to be welcoming some recent decisions by the United States - even though they happen to come from a man Iranian operatives have allegedly been plotting to assassinate.

President Donald Trump's moves to freeze spending on foreign aid and overhaul, maybe even end, the U.S. Agency for International Development have been lauded in Iranian state media.

The reports say the decisions will halt funding for opponents of the country's Shiite theocracy - pro-democracy activists and others supported through programs as part of U.S. government's efforts to help democracy worldwide.

At the same time, Iranian officials appear to be signaling that they are waiting for a message from Trump on whether he wants to negotiate over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear program. At stake are potentially billions of dollars withheld from Iran through crushing sanctions and the future of a program on the precipice of enriching weapons-grade uranium.

And even when signing an executive order to reimpose his "maximum pressure on Iran" on Tuesday, Trump suggested he wanted to deal with Tehran.

Meanwhile, ordinary Iranians worry what all this could mean for them.

"It encourages hard-liners inside Iran to continue repressions because they feel the U.S. would have less capability in supporting Iranian people who seek freedom," said Maryam Faraji, a 27-year-old waitress in a coffee shop in northern Tehran.

The state-run IRNA news agency said that "cutting the budget of foreign-based opposition" could "affect the sphere of relations" between Tehran and Washington.

Newspapers, like the conservative Hamshahri daily, described Iran's opposition as "counterrevolutionaries" who had been "celebrating" Trump's election as heralding the "last days of life of the Islamic Republic."

They then "suddenly faced the surprise of cut funding from their employer," the newspaper crowed.

Even the reformist newspaper Hammihan compared it to a "cold shower" for opponents of Iran's theocracy abroad, an idea also expressed by the Foreign Ministry.

"Those financial resources are not charity donations," Esmail Baghaei, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, said during a briefing with reporters on Monday. "They are wages paid in exchange for services."

"This is a clear sign of America's interventionist policy particularly during the Biden administration, which tried to pressure Iran and meddle in its domestic affairs through financial aid," Baghaei added.

It remains unclear how funding for Iranian activists and opposition figures would be affected by the USAID decision.

The lion's share of money for civil society in Iran has come through the U.S. State Department's Near East Regional Democracy fund, known by the acronym NERD, which grew as an American response to the Green Movement protests in 2009.

In 2024, the Biden administration requested \$65 million for NERD after over \$600 million had been appropriated by Congress for the fund, according to the Congressional Research Service. That money and other funding had gone in the past toward training journalists and activists on how to report on human rights abuses, funding access to the internet amid government shutdowns and other issues.

The State Department did not respond to a request for comment over the NERD funding and its future. American officials for years have kept the awardees of NERD grants secret due to what they describe as the risk activists face from Iran, particularly after Iranian intelligence officers have allegedly targeted in kidnapping or assassination plots, U.S. prosecutors say.

Iran also noticed that the U.S. avoided direct criticism of the Islamic Republic during a review by the United Nations Human Rights Council meeting in Geneva last week. For those in Iran's government, there's anticipation this could mean that Trump is willing to negotiate, something he repeatedly brought up in his election campaign as a possibility.

Even Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters, in a speech in September opened the door to talks with the U.S., saying there is "no harm" in engaging with the "enemy." More recently, he tempered that, warning that sinister plots could still be "concealed behind diplomatic smiles."

"We must be careful about who we are dealing with, who we are negotiating with, and who we are speaking to," Khamenei said last week.

While Baghaei, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, acknowledged Iran hasn't seen any "green light" yet for talks, Iran is trying to do everything it can to signal it wants them.

The country's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian, who campaigned on outreach to the West, urged officials on Monday to listen to dissent from the Iranian people and avoid further crackdowns like those that followed the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini.

"The enemies are hoping that by stirring up disputes within the country, they will throw people into the streets and then ride the wave of protests themselves," Pezeshkian said.

As he signed the executive order on Iran on Tuesday, Trump warned the country would be "obliterated" if he was assassinated by Tehran. But he still left the door open for talks.

"I'm going to sign it, but hopefully we're not going to have to use it very much," he said from the Oval Office. "We will see whether or not we can arrange or work out a deal with Iran."

"We don't want to be tough on Iran. We don't want to be tough on anybody," Trump added. "But they just can't have a nuclear bomb."

However, factions within Iran's theocracy are still likely to oppose talks, whether out of their own self interest or over anger that Trump ordered the 2020 drone strike that killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the country's top general and a revered figure.

That killing fueled Iranian calls for Trump's assassination - and alleged plots against him. In November, the Justice Department disclosed an Iranian murder-for-hire plot to kill Trump. While Iran denied being involved, Tehran has a history of plotting the killing of opponents abroad.

"This will not have any impact on the factions that oppose talks with the U.S. but maybe some moderates find it as an excuse to say that Trump is taking some steps," Iranian political analyst Ahmad Zeiabadi said.

The Board of Directors of **Kuwait Telecommunications Company (stc)** is pleased to announce to its shareholders that the company has achieved a net profit of KD 314 million (earnings per share 31 fils) for the financial year ended 31st December 2024.

FY - 2024
Total Revenue **336.5** ^{+2.8%}
KD Million

FY - 2024
EBITDA **85.3** ^{+0.3%}
KD Million

FY - 2024
Net Profit* **31.4** ^{-4.0%}
KD Million

* Net profit includes non-recurring expense from the Employee Retirement Plan of **KD 1.9 mn.** Excluding this non-recurring expense, normalized net profit amounts to **KD 33.3 mn.**, with a growth of 1.8%

FY - 2024
Dividend Yield **6.5%** ^{+4.8%}

FY - 2024
Cash Dividends** **35** ^{0.0%}
Kuwaiti Fils per share

** Cash dividends distribution for the year 2024 is subject to the approval of the Ordinary General Assembly.

In an interview with CNBC International

NBK maintains a strong financial position to sustain growth into 2025, says Al-Bahar

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Ms. Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO at National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) mentioned that despite the spark of geopolitical tensions, its negative consequences on the business environment and the downside cycle of interest rates, the bank managed to sustain profit trends across different business lines in 2024.

In an interview of CNBC International, Al-Bahar added, "Our resilience against challenges testifies the success of our diverse strategic initiatives in creating value to customers, communities and stakeholders alike."

Government agenda priorities

Al-Bahar went on to say that on the legislative front, developments on long-awaited laws are progressing with expectations of their passing in the near future. "On the debt law front, it remains a top priority on the government's agenda given the ever-increasing level of public spending, volatile oil revenues, and efforts to elevate sovereign ratings."

"The government seeks to promote FDIs through increasing investment opportunities in the field of renewable energy, infrastructure, tourism and technology, as well as increasing non-oil revenues to contribute initially to 10% of total revenues; with efforts to increase this contribution to higher levels in line with GCC peers through revisions of taxes and fees frameworks and diversifying income and limiting spending and injecting government investments in the domestic economy."

"With regards to mortgages, we witnessed some adjustments to the underlying laws for housing as an instance, which shall facilitate in part the pass-



NBK resilient amid global challenges, Deputy CEO Shaikha Al-Bahar claims.

ing of the mortgage law. Overall and in the presence of such developments, we are becoming more and more optimistic with regards to the passing of key laws including the mortgage and debt law soon as the government is clearly pushing towards structural reforms," she added.

Strong year for project awards

On the pickup in development project market, Al-Bahar commented, "Project awards positive momentum in 2024 continued in each quarter."

"The government also recently announced the inclusion of more than 100 projects in the 2025-2026 budget, covering the state's needs in various sectors at a cost of KD1.7 billion," she explained.

Innovation and excellence

Al-Bahar mentioned that NBK constantly strives for excellence and innovation in all products and services pro-

vided to customers as the cornerstones of its success.

"We will continue demonstrating agility and resilience in navigating the evolving economic landscape and seizing emerging opportunities with cutting-edge technologies and data-driven strategies," she said.

"In Kuwait, on the retail front, we will continue with improving our digital offerings towards targeting various client segments and boosting customer satisfaction."

"With the domestic corporate banking landscape poised to improve on the back of projects activity momentum, we will focus on capturing growth opportunities including enhanced services through a customer-centric approach. Beyond borders, our international banking group will continue to expand in key markets, optimizing costs and leveraging technology to enhance operational efficiency in

- Our adaptable business model will benefit the bank in diversifying revenue streams and mitigating risks in the face of global challenges
- The infrastructure development agenda and project awards have accelerated as the decision-making process is simplified
- Our performance affirms our ability to capture growth opportunities while maintaining our high asset quality and healthy capitalization levels

addition to exploring opportunities in sustainable finance," she explained

"Likewise, as we continue to stand-out in building a wealth management powerhouse, NBK Wealth aims to broaden reach by presence and advisory and investment offerings to enrich client experience."

High adaptability

Al-Bahar emphasized that NBK's adaptable business model will operationally benefit the bank in diversifying revenue streams, focus on core banking activities and mitigate risks when it comes to facing global and regional challenges.

"Our ability to adjust to changing economic conditions is demonstrated through the execution of our strategic investments and diversification of our strategy, reflecting our high asset quality, ample liquidity and a historically strong balance sheet."

"With our global presence across 13 markets, we stood resilient in the face of challenges and the modest domestic growth and are well positioned to build on our diverse strategic agenda during 2025," she affirmed.

'Strategic collaboration to boost retail leadership'

LuLu Hypermarket joins forces with Unilever & Al Bahar for 2025 strategy



Strategic collaboration with Unilever and Al Bahar to shape LuLu's 2025 Vision.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: LuLu Hypermarket top management attended in the Joint Business Plan 2025, an exclusive strategic meeting held by Unilever and Mohamed Abdulrahman Al Bahar (Al Bahar-United) at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Kuwait. The meeting served as a key platform for aligning business strategies, fostering deeper collaboration, and exploring innovative solutions to drive retail excellence in the coming year.

With the market landscape evolving rapidly, the discussions focused on strategy, growth ambitions, and competitive positioning in the retail sector. Industry leaders and key decision-makers explored opportunities for

expansion, innovation, and strengthening market leadership, emphasizing ways to enhance collaboration, drive sustainable growth, and deliver greater value to customers.

LuLu Hypermarket, known for its commitment to quality and innovation, reaffirmed its dedication to enhancing customer engagement, optimizing retail operations, and driving growth through strategic partnerships. The collaboration with Unilever and Al Bahar will play a crucial role in introducing exclusive product offerings, launching impactful promotional campaigns, and reinforcing sustainability initiatives in 2025.

By strengthening supply chain ef-

iciencies, expanding product portfolios, and leveraging advanced marketing strategies, the partnership-driven approach underscores Al Bahar United and LuLu Hypermarket's commitment to excellence, ensuring they remain at the forefront of the retail industry.

As a leading retail brand, LuLu Hypermarket continues to adapt to market transformations and evolving consumer preferences, ensuring customers receive the best in value, quality, and variety. By working closely with global brands and key business partners, LuLu remains at the forefront of retail innovation, setting new industry benchmarks.

New tariffs target broad range of goods

Trump's new tariffs could drive up prices & hurt growth, experts warn

WASHINGTON, Feb 5, (AP) - When Donald Trump started the biggest trade war since the 1930s in his first term, his impulsive combination of threats and import taxes on U.S. trading partners created chaos, generated drama -- and drew criticism from mainstream economists who favor free trade.

But it didn't do much damage to the U.S. economy. Or much good. Inflation stayed under control. The economy kept growing as it had before. And America's massive trade deficits, the main target of Trump's ire, proved resistant to his rhetoric and his tariffs: Already big, they got bigger.

The trade war sequel that Trump has planned for his second term - if it unfolds the way he's described it - would likely be a different matter altogether. Trump appears to have grander ambitions and is operating in a far more treacherous economic environment this time.

His plans to plaster tariffs of 25% on goods from Mexico and Canada and 10% on China - and to follow those up by targeting the European Union - would threaten growth, and push up prices in the United States, undermining his campaign pledge to eliminate the inflation that plagued President Joe Biden.

The tariffs would be paid by U.S. importers, who would then try to pass along the higher costs to consumers through higher prices.

Trump himself has warned of possible fallout. "WILL THERE BE SOME PAIN? YES, MAYBE (AND MAYBE NOT!)," Trump said in a social media post Sunday. "BUT WE WILL MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, AND IT WILL ALL BE WORTH THE PRICE THAT MUST BE PAID."

For now, some of the hostilities are on hold. Trump on Monday paused the tariffs on Canada and Mexico for 30 days to allow more negotiations after those countries agreed to do more to stop the flow of illegal drugs and undocumented workers into the United States.

Tariffs

But he went ahead with the 10% tariffs on China Tuesday. Beijing promptly retaliated by imposing tariffs on U.S. products, including coal and big cars. It also is restricting exports of critical minerals and launching an antitrust investigation into Google.

Trump views tariffs - taxes on imports - as an economic elixir that can restore factories to the American heartland, raise money for the government and pressure foreign countries to do what he wants.

During his first term, Trump put tariffs on most Chinese goods and on imported solar panels, washing machines, steel and aluminum. The tax increases might have raised prices on those items, but they had little or no impact on overall inflation, which remained modest. Nor did they do much to restore factory jobs.

Economists agree that a second Trump trade war could be far costlier than the first.

"That was then. This is now," said trade analyst William Reinsch of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. That is why the stock market briefly fell sharply Monday on anticipation of the tariffs, before rebounding on news of the pause with Mexico and Canada.

During Trump's first term, his trade team carefully focused its tariff hit list to avoid or at least delay the impact on consumers. They targeted industrial products and not

those "that would show up on Walmart's shelves," said Reinsch, a former U.S. trade official. "That tamped down the impact."

This time, by contrast, the tariffs are across the board - although the tariffs Trump had planned and then paused would have limited the levy on Canadian energy to 10%, showing that he was mindful of how much Americans in northern and midwestern states depend on oil and electricity from north of the border.

In Boca Raton, Florida, the toy company Basic Fun is preparing to raise prices and absorb a hit to profits when the tariffs land.

Ninety percent of Basic Fun's toys come from China, including Tonka and Care Bears. CEO Jay Foreman says the price on the Tonka Classic Steel Mighty Dump Truck is likely to rise later this year from \$29.99 to as much as \$39.99.

Five years ago, the Trump administration spared toys, exempting them from its China tariffs. This time, Foreman said, "we are now just going to forecast a lot of money draining out of the company."

Threats

In addition to the threats to Canada, Mexico and the EU, Trump has threatened a worldwide tariff of 10% to 20%. The breadth of his potential targets means it will be much harder for companies to escape his tariffs.

In his first term, many companies dodged his China tariffs by moving production to Mexico or Vietnam. Now, suppliers anywhere could wind up in Trump's crosshairs. "It sends the signal that no place is safe," said Mary Lovely, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Also worrying, economists say, is a retaliation clause the Trump team inserted in the tariff orders he signed Saturday.

If other countries retaliate against Trump's tariffs with tariffs of their own - as China did and Canada and Mexico have threatened -- Trump will lash back with still more tariffs. That risks "setting off a spiraling trade war" of tit-for-tat tariffs and counter-tariffs, said Eswar Prasad, professor of trade policy at Cornell University.

But the biggest difference is the economic backdrop Trump must contend with this time.

Six years ago, inflation was low - maybe even too low, the Federal Reserve fretted. Trump's first-term tariffs didn't make a dent.

Inflation isn't so benign anymore. Prices surged in the unexpected boom that followed the end of COVID-19 lockdowns. Inflation has come down from the four-decade high it hit in mid-2022, but it's still stuck above the Fed's 2% target and hasn't shown much improvement since summer.

Trump's tariffs could rekindle the inflationary trend and convince the Fed to cancel or postpone the two interest rate cuts it had anticipated this year. That would risk keeping "interest rates at their current elevated level for a longer period in 2025. That will push up mortgage and loan borrowing rates ... and reduce real growth," said Boston College economist Brian Bethune.

For now, businesses, investors and U.S. trading partners are waiting to see what the unpredictable Trump will do next. Will he re-impose the tariffs on Canada and Mexico after 30 days? Will he really go after the EU? Or make good on his threat of a universal tariff?

Jewellery retailer to open 3 showrooms in NZ with NZD 75 million investment

Malabar Gold to expand into New Zealand under UAE-NZ CEPA

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 375 showrooms across 13 countries, is set to expand its footprint into New Zealand. This strategic move is aligned with the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) signed between the United Arab Emirates and New Zealand, which fosters increased trade and economic collaboration between the two nations.

With the entirety of Malabar Gold & Diamonds' international operations based out of the Malabar International Hub in the UAE, the signing of CEPA between the UAE & New Zealand will enable the brand to further streamline their business operation as it relates to expanding their retail presence into the 14th global country of operation.

"As a globally recognized jewellery retailer managing its international operations from the UAE, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the UAE and New Zealand significantly bolsters our efforts to enter this new market. This agreement not only allows us to strengthen economic ties but also provides us with an opportunity to introduce our products and services to a whole new audience. By capitalizing on the opportunities presented by this bilateral trade agreement, Malabar Gold & Diamonds marks a significant milestone in our overarching vision to become the world's number one jewellery retailer," commented Mr. M.P. Ahmed, Chairman of Malabar Group.



From left to right: Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Honourable Todd McClay, New Zealand's Minister for Trade, Mr. Ahmad Zakkout, New Zealand's Consul - General Dubai & Northern Emirates & Trade Commissioner - UAE, Qatar, Levant & Africa, Mr. Sitaraman Varadarajan, Head - Business Development, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

In the initial phase of its expansion into New Zealand, Malabar Gold & Diamonds will invest NZD 75 million to establish its presence in the region. This significant investment will see the launch of three world-class showrooms, bringing the brand's exceptional jewellery collections and renowned craftsmanship to New Zealand's discerning customers.

"It's encouraging to see the CEPA already driving increased trade and investment between our two countries," said New Zealand Trade Commissioner to the United Arab Emirates and Consul General to Dubai & Northern Emirates, Mr. Ahmad Zakkout. "We're excited to continue fostering investment and business opportunities between New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates," he continued.

"New Zealand is a market brimming with potential, offering us an exceptional opportunity to connect with a diverse customer base that appreciates the artistry, quality, and authenticity synonymous with Malabar Gold & Diamonds," commented Mr. Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds. "As the UAE stands as one of the world's premier jewellery trading hubs and the base of our international operations, the provisions in CEPA that promotes UAE-NZ trade opens a more efficient and streamlined pathway into the market. With a legacy built on trust, transparency, and customer satisfaction, this expansion into New Zealand represents a

transformative step in redefining the region's jewellery landscape."

"While our global growth has been rapid, it has always remained firmly aligned with our ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) principles. With a 100% track record of strict compliance with local regulations, our expansion into New Zealand will uphold our commitment to operating as a model organization that prioritizes responsibility and sustainability in every aspect of its business. This is in line with the trade and development chapter charted out in the CEPA" said Mr. Abdul Salam K.P, Vice Chairman of Malabar Group.

In addition to introducing its signature collections and services to jewellery lovers in New Zealand, Malabar Gold & Diamonds will continue its commitment to sustainability and ethical practices. The new showrooms will adhere to the brand's globally recognized standards of ethical sourcing, eco-friendly processes, and social welfare initiatives.

ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) initiatives have been a key component of Malabar Group's operations throughout the years, with a focus on Health, Housing, Hunger Eradication, Women empowerment, Education and Environment. The group ensures that all stakeholders continue to benefit from the growth of the business and contributes 5% of their profit to CSR/ESG initiatives in the same country of operation.

Bilateral cooperation in accounting, auditing explored in meeting

ICAI, KAAA delegation meets Kuwait's envoy in India

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: A delegation from The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) - Kuwait Chapter, led by Chairperson CA Aditya Dhanuka, past chairpersons CA Rabin Gonsalves and CA Sriram Gopalakrishnan and Treasurer CA Umesh Soni, the Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association (KAAA), was represented by the Chairman Mr. Sabah al Jalawi, Member Mr. Mohammed Al Shuaib met with His Excellency Meshal Al Shemali, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to India, at the Kuwait Embassy in New Delhi.

During the meeting, the delegation engaged in meaningful discussions with HE Meshal Al Shemali, covering a wide range of topics of mutual interest, including bilateral cooperation in the fields of finance, accounting, and auditing, as well as opportunities to further strengthen professional ties between Kuwait and India.

The Ambassador expressed his appreciation for the collaborative efforts between the KAAA and the ICAI Kuwait Chapter, recognizing their role in promoting professional excellence, knowledge exchange, and capacity building in the financial sector. He also commended the contribution of Indian professionals in Kuwait's economic landscape and emphasized the importance of continued engagement between both organizations.

The ICAI Kuwait Chapter and KAAA reaffirmed their commitment to fostering stronger partnerships, organizing joint initiatives, and contributing to the advancement of financial and auditing standards in the region. The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides looking forward to enhanced cooperation and knowledge sharing in the future.



A combo photo from the ICAI Kuwait Chapter, KAAA delegation's meeting with Kuwait's Ambassador to India in New Delhi.

Weekly draw

ABK names Laila Bashar Arafah as Alfouz's winner

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is excited to announce Laila Bashar Arafah as the winner of the Alfouz KD 10,000 weekly draw on Monday, 3 February 2025. The draw took place in the presence of a Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative, ensuring transparency.

From the highly coveted mega annual draw of a KD 5,000 monthly salary for 10 years to its KD 10,000 weekly prize, the account has attracted significant attention in the Kuwaiti market. Based on the account's great success, ABK decided to go above and beyond to reward customer loyalty.

With a KD 100,000 quarterly draw, in addition to an exciting KD 20,000 monthly draw, the Alfouz account continues to surpass expectations and deliver even more customer satisfaction.

To top it off, ABK has simplified the ability to open the account and win! Customers can enter the draws and get extra entry chances for every KD 10 deposited. The more you save, the higher your chance to be the next Alfouz winner!

ABK encourages everyone to open an Alfouz draw account or increase their balance to participate in the upcoming draw, which is scheduled to take place on Monday, 10 February 2025.

Open an Alfouz account today and enjoy increased opportunities to win the lifestyle you've been waiting for!

To learn more about the Alfouz account and its range of exciting draws and prizes, please follow ABK's Instagram account @abk_kuwait, visit eahli.com, contact Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899 or visit one of the Bank's branches across Kuwait.



Some photos from the event.



Association strengthens alumni ties with fun-filled get-together

AMUOBA holds General Body Meeting, family event at Wafra

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: On 31st January 2025, the AMUOBA Kuwait Chapter organized a General Body meeting along with family get-together at home away from home, enjoying the comforts of a farmhouse in Wafra. It was arranged in such a way that nostalgia could be seen on everyone's face. The breakfast, featuring tea, chola poori, and jalebi, evoked memories of a roadside café on the university campus. A freshly cooked lunch, along with evening snacks and rounds of tea and kahwa, made the day even more relaxing.

While enjoying the beauty of nature away from the dust and smoke of the city, various games were played, escaping the monotony of routine. Families spend quality time and create lasting memories in a relaxed and fun environment, which is instrumental in fostering stronger relationships, enhancing communication, and rejuvenating everyone.

Behind this picturesque day out were the conscientious

and meticulous efforts of the entire AMUOBA-5 team. The day commenced with breakfast, followed by lunch and evening snacks. Since it was cloud catering, everything was served hot from the kitchen to the plate.

This was all due to the tireless efforts of the food committee, comprising Shahnawaz Siddique, Shahid Ali and Tauqir Ahmad. There were several games for all age groups, allowing the child within us to emerge. Many gifts were distributed for the games, along with consolation prizes.

The games were efficiently managed by Jt. Secretary- Mohammad Khurshid Anwar and EC Member- Maqsood Habib Khan, and on the ladies' side by Gen. Secretary- Ms. Shazia Mansoor.

Along with the family outing, AMUOBA conducted the General Body meeting (GB meeting). The GB meeting is where alumni and office bearers gather every year. The office

bearers present the report for the entire year and the alumni provide their feedback, raise queries, or discuss any discord that the Executive Council (EC) members and alumni then resolve in harmony. The GB Meet was anchored by Ms. Talat Fatma (Dy. OSD). It began with a recitation of verses from the Holy Quran by Master Hassan Zaidi, followed by a translation by Master Aariz Obaid.

President Mr. Aslam Parvez addressed the gathering and appealed for contributions toward the upliftment of the community. General Secretary Ms. Shazia Mansoor presented the report for the year 2024 and the budget for 2025. Officer on Special Duty Mr. Yusuf Abdullah displayed the audited account statement for the year 2024. Lastly, the Vice President, Mr. Tariq Waseem concluded the meeting with a very humble vote of thanks. The esteemed alumni provided a lot of feedback and appreciated the efforts of the association.

"A team is not just a group of people who work together; a team is a group of people who trust each other." With this thought, the EC put all its efforts into making the event a success. From President Aslam Parvez, who dedicated day and night to ensure the event was flawless, to Vice President Tariq Waseem, who worked hard to make everyone comfortable, General Secretary Ms. Shazia Mansoor, and Deputy OSD Ms. Talat Fatma took care of all the ladies, whether it was food, games, or any other requirements. The food, logistics, venue, games, etc., were managed by the very dynamic team of Mohammad Khurshid Anwar (Jt. Secretary), Yusuf Abdullah (OSD), Ms. Talat Fatma (Dy. OSD), Adil Sareer, M. Shahid Ali, Shahnawaz Siddique, Maqsood Habib Khan, Tauqir Ahmad and Masood Alam.

Lastly, with the efforts of the entire team and the support of the alumni the day concluded on a positive note.

Team HSKP holds welcome meeting with Pakistan Ambassador, H.E. Dr. Zafar Iqbal

By M. Irfan Shafiq

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: Team "Hum Sub Ka Pakistan" held a meeting with Ambassador of Pakistan H.E. Dr. Zafar Iqbal to welcome him as the Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait. Team was Led by President Inaam Morganite along with other team members. Team members extended their best wishes for the Ambassador and wished him all the success. Community Welfare Attaché Hamza Tauqir was also present in the meeting.

President Inaam Morganite enlightened the vision and mission of the organization. He mentioned that "Hum Sub Ka Pakistan" is an organization with the aim of providing different services to Pakistani community in Kuwait as well as portraying a soft and positive Image of Pakistan in the country.

Ambassador of Pakistan, HE Dr. Zafar Iqbal extended his best wishes for the team and he mentioned that Pakistani Diaspora residing in Kuwait is doing very good job for their countrymen residing in Kuwait. There are many high qualified Pakistanis working on top positions in the best organizations of Kuwait. Moreover, we should work more and more to strengthen the ties between two brotherly countries and uplift the positive image of Pakistan. Team HSKP, despite of any political affiliation, is doing great work for the two brotherly countries and giving their maximum to serve the Pakistani Diaspora residing in Kuwait. He mentioned that Embassy of Pakistan is fully supporting all the result-oriented organizations who are providing their services to the community.

At the end, cake-cutting ceremony was held to mark the 4th Foundation Day of HSKP.



Photo from the event.

Obituary



Chicago Chess Records producer Gene Barge attends a screening of the film 'Cadillac Records,' about Chess, at AMC River East theater, Nov. 24, 2008, in Chicago. (AP)

Durable saxophonist

Renowned sax man 'Daddy G' dies at 98

NEW YORK, Feb 5, (AP): Gene "Daddy G" Barge, an admired and durable saxophone player, songwriter and producer who worked on hits by Natalie Cole, oversaw recordings by Muddy Waters, performed with the Rolling Stones and helped inspire the dance classic "Quarter to Three," has died. He was 98.

He died in his sleep Sunday at his home in Chicago, according to daughter Gina Barge.

Barge's career spanned much of the post-World War II era. He was in college jazz combos in the 1940s, backed Little Richard and James Brown when they were starting out, played a long, sweet solo on the '50s standard "C.C. Rider" and collaborated with Gary "U.S." Bonds on "Quarter to Three" and other '60s party favorites. He later recorded with such blues greats as Waters, Buddy Guy and Willie Dixon, co-produced Cole's Grammy Award-winning single "Sophisticated Lady," toured with the Stones in the early 1980s and even played on Public Enemy's "New Whirl Odor" album, for which he was credited as "the legendary Mr. Gene Barge."

Often cited as a precursor to the E Street Band's Clarence Clemons, he held rare status among saxophonists - so well known for a time that he was called out by name on two hits of the early '60s - "Quarter to Three" and the uptempo doo-wop number "Bristol Stomp," in which the Dovells sing: "It started in Bristol at a dee jay hop/They hollered and whistled never wanted to stop/We pony and twisted and we rocked with Daddy G."

Consultant

In the 1970s and after, he had success as a character actor in thrillers and crime stories, his films including "Above the Law," "The Package" and "The Fugitive." Barge was also a consultant for Martin Scorsese's documentary "The Blues."

When the musician was in his 80s, Public Enemy's Chuck D called him "the flyest octogenarian I know."

The eldest of eight children, James Gene Barge was born and raised in Norfolk, Virginia, and dreamed of professional football before playing clarinet with his high school marching band inspired him to try music. He took up the tenor saxophone shortly after ending a two-year stint in the Air Force and right before enrolling in West Virginia State College: His father, a welder in the Norfolk Navy Yard, had been given one by a visiting British World War II soldier.

"The saxophone was the instrument, coming up, that had the sound closest to the human voice," Barge told Virginia Living in 2007. "It was the one with the impact. It was the featured instrument in the band, so that was the one you wanted to play."

By the 1950s, Barge was jamming with local jazz and rhythm and blues groups and leading the Gene Barge Band. The release of his instrumental "Country," a minor hit in 1955, helped bring on a bigger commercial breakthrough.

Rhythm and blues singer Chuck Willis invited him to join his touring band and brought him to a recording session for Atlantic Records in New York. Willis was recording the sinuous "C.C. Rider," which topped the R&B charts in 1957 and was covered by Elvis Presley, the Grateful Dead and many others. The studio saxophone player wasn't working out, so Barge stepped in.

"They did 27 takes and weren't satisfied. So Chuck said, 'Look, why don't you just let Gene run down one to get the feel,'" he told Virginia Living. "So I ran down one and they said, 'Hold on, that's it, you got it. Let's cut it.' ... And two or three takes later, man, we had cut the song."

Success

Barge had even greater success a few years later. He had returned to Norfolk, working with a Legrand label owner Frank Guida and forming the Church Street Five, named for a major city roadway. The Church Street musicians would cut an instrumental, "A Night With Daddy G," that was the basis of "Quarter to Three" and led to Barge's professional nickname.

"Daddy G" originally referred to a local preacher, Bishop "Daddy" Grace, one of whose churches was near Legrand and the site for local shows that included members of the Church Street Five. "A Night With Daddy G" was a driving dance track led by Barge's hot tenor sax and influenced by New Orleans rhythm and blues. Bonds, a fellow Legrand artist and childhood friend of Barge's, loved the song. But he thought it needed lyrics, writing in his memoir "By U.S. Bonds" that it lacked a "catchy phrase that makes you anticipate the entire melody."

"The players were setting up and they started playing 'A Night With Daddy G,'" Bonds wrote of the studio session, "and I started singing some nonsense and it occurred to me that maybe I could add some words."

"Quarter to Three," a No. 1 hit in 1961, became a rock standard and a featured part of Bruce Springsteen's concerts. Now known to many as "Daddy G," Barge would collaborate on other hits with Bonds, including "School Is Out" and "Dear Lady Twist," and work with a wide range of artists over the following decades.

With Chicago's Chess Records, he played on such hits as Fontella Bass' "Rescue Me" and produced albums by Waters and Little Milton among others. With Stax Records in Memphis, Tennessee, he arranged the gospel favorites "Lord Don't Move the Mountain," by Inez Andrews, and the Beautiful Zion Baptist Church's "I'll Make It Alright."

MacKnight commemorates Bach's 275th death anniversary

US organist playing 18 hours of Bach this year

LITTLE ROCK, Ark., Feb 5, (AP): It was hushed inside a 140-year-old cathedral on the outskirts of Little Rock's downtown as about five dozen people sat in the pews during a recent lunch break in January.

The nave filled with the sounds of the Gothic church's pipe organ, and a screen showed a man performing the works of Johann Sebastian Bach. Those gathered weren't there for church, but for the third concert in a series Colin MacKnight is performing over the next year to commemorate the 275th anniversary of Bach's death.

MacKnight, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral's music director, is performing all of Bach's organ works throughout 2025 - one lunch break at a time. The ambitious plan entails performing 18 hours of music in half-hour increments nearly every Wednesday.

"I've wanted to for a really long time because it's, I think, the most thorough way of immersing myself in the brilliance of Johann Sebastian Bach," MacKnight said one morning as he rehearsed in the empty cathedral the day before a concert.

The concerts in Little Rock are among several events around the world this year commemorating the German composer's legacy and the anniversary of his death.

MacKnight, who is from Bethesda, Maryland, has been music director at Trinity for three years. He said the first time he remembers hearing Bach was at a relative's funeral when he was about 12 years old.

"Something about hearing it that time just really mesmerized me and that was the beginning of my love of

Bach," he said.

The 31-year-old's hands move easily between the four keyboards of the organ console, flanked by knobs controlling different sounds that are assembled into various combinations.

Underneath, his feet press on the pedalboards - combining to create the notes of Bach's works. MacKnight, who has played the organ since he was 16, acknowledges how dizzying the sight of the instrument can be for newcomers.

"If you don't know what you're looking at, it's a little overwhelming, like an airplane console," he said.

Mini-lessons

MacKnight's concerts - which are free and open to the public - are also mini-lessons for those who come, with a glossary of terms like concerto and fugue included in the program. In between pieces, MacKnight gives audience members some background on Bach and his organ works.

"These pieces are in the unfortunate category of being much, much harder than they sound," he says.

Generally regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time, Bach is known in particular for his organ works and their heavy use of pedals and complex structures. Few organists perform the composer's complete organ works, given the difficulty and quantity of the music.

They include Grammy-winning organist Paul Jacobs, who taught MacKnight at the Juilliard School. Jacobs performed an 18-hour nonstop concert of Bach's organ

works to mark the 250th anniversary of the composer's death in 2000.

The free concerts so far have drawn a mix of church members, classical music aficionados and newcomers who say they want a quiet break from the daily bustle.

"I like the complexity of the music and the power of the organ, which stirs me internally," said Barry Coplin, a member of the church who has attended two of MacKnight's concerts.

Ben Wiley, who lives about 30 minutes away, is a classical music fan who was attending his third of MacKnight's shows and said he appreciates being able to hear Bach's works in half-hour increments.

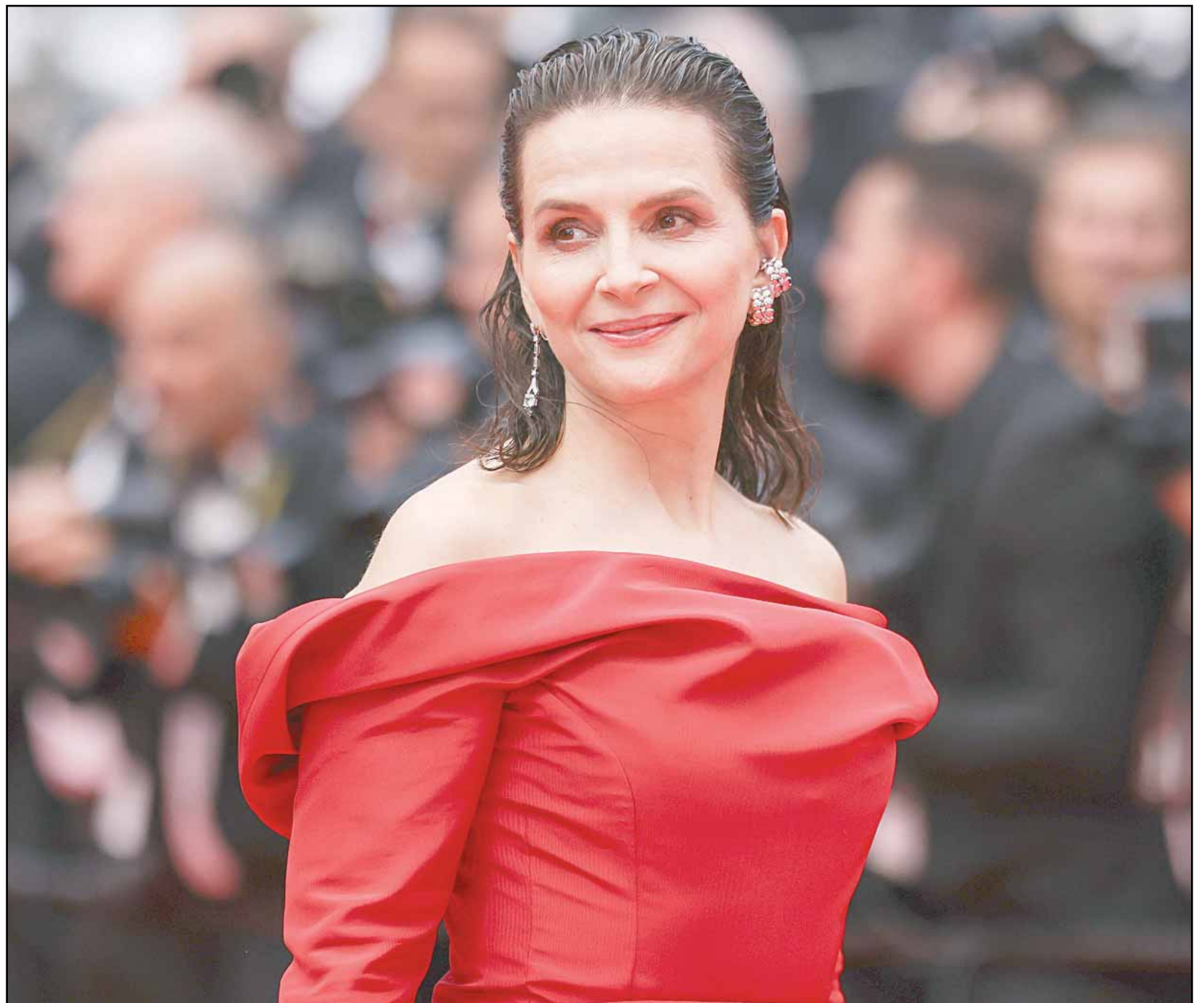
"It's a good way to be able to get it done in short bursts, to be able to absorb it better and come back to get the next batch," he said.

MacKnight is also performing a 100-minute concert of Bach's most extensive organ work - the Clavier-Übung III, sometimes referred to as the German Organ Mass - on July 28, the day the German composer died in 1750 at 65.

The Rev. Thomas Alexander, a priest at Trinity, said the concerts allow the public to enjoy MacKnight's talents, come together and learn more about Bach in a way they normally wouldn't be able to.

"It's like reading someone's complete collection of novels. You get to really get to know someone in a comprehensive way," Alexander said. "But it also builds a sense of community."

Film



Juliette Binoche poses for photographers upon arrival at the awards ceremony and the premiere of the film 'The Second Act' during the 77th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, Tuesday, May 14, 2024. (AP)

Juliette Binoche named jury president of 78th Cannes Film Festival

Juliette Binoche will preside over the jury for the 78th Cannes Film Festival, festival organizers announced Tuesday.

Binoche will succeed last year's jury president, Greta Gerwig, making this the second time Cannes has had back-to-back female jury heads.

Binoche, the French actor, has been a mainstay at Cannes over the years. She first appeared at the festival 40 years ago, with the premiere of André

Téchiné's "Rendez-vous." She's since been back to Cannes many times, including for Krzysztof Kieslowski's "Blue," Michael Haneke's "Caché," and Abbas Kiarostami's "Certified Copy."

"In 1985, I walked up the steps for the first time with the enthusiasm and uncertainty of a young actress; I never imagined I'd return 40 years later in the honorary role of President of the Jury," Binoche said in a statement. "I appreciate the privilege,

the responsibility and the absolute need for humility."

The Cannes Film Festival, running May 13-24, will unveil its lineup in mid-April. Last year, Gerwig's jury selected Sean Baker's "Anora" for the festival's top honor, the Palme d'Or.

The last time two women served as successive jury president in Cannes, 1966 jury head Sophia Loren followed Olívia de Havilland. (AP)

A fun, colorful ride for graphic novel fans

'Dog Man' hits Hollywood, but it's ruff

By Mark Kennedy

Whether or not you'll enjoy the "Dog Man" movie is sort of dependent on how much you're a fan of the graphic novels. I was split - like its wordless hero.

Creator Dav Pilkey's quirky, kinetic world has nicely made the visual leap to the big screen, but something is missing. The Hollywoodization - like a ray blasted from a typical Pilkey lumbering robot - has leveled-out the idiosyncrasy and overstuffing the narrative. Newcomers may be stunned - and not in a good way.

The movie version has celebrities - Pete Davidson, Lil Rel Howery, Isla Fisher and Ricky Gervais - less toilet humor, less puns and really no jokes for parents, despite a few references to "Die Hard" and "Apocalypse Now." Other studios have managed to keep the folks who buy the tickets at least entertained with some sly adult things to snack on.

The guerilla feel of the books has given way to a blockbuster, explosion-filled, deep message film about fatherhood, optimism and love. What once was created in a school hallway because its creator was disruptive in class is now enjoying a marketing campaign that involves digital billboards, costume character tours and changing the color of the Empire State Building's lights. Miley Cyrus' "Flowers" is on the soundtrack. It's subversive no more.

Peter Hastings, director, screenwriter and animal voice of Dog Man, has had a hand in Pilkey's much better adaptation of "Captain Underpants," but this time smashes together characters and plot lines from several of the books



This image released by Universal Pictures shows Petey, voiced by Pete Davidson, (left), and Dog Man, voiced by Peter Hastings in a scene from DreamWorks Animation's 'Dog Man.' (AP)

in a way that is hard to follow even for fans.

It starts as the origin story - a policeman's body is sewed onto the head of his faithful dog after a bomb blast - and then we get the supervillain Petey the Cat, his adorable clone Li'l Petey, the chief of police and the mayor, the psychokinetic fish Flippy, the 80-Hexotron Droid-Formigon robot, a pushy TV reporter and build-

ings coming alive. It leans a lot on 2017's "A Tale of Two Kittens," the third book in the Dog Man series.

The sparseness of the graphic novels is gone and we get an interior life for Dog Man, including a sort of weird tangent about his depression over losing his past life. Fans get a look inside his doghouse - who was expecting a piano, a grandfather clock or a gramophone? - and there's lots of licking and chasing squirrels. Typical humor: A sign at an active volcano that reads: "No lifeguard on duty."

At the movie's heart is a story as old as time - good versus evil - and which will Li'l Petey pick. His father, Petey, is a supervillain who needs Prozac - "The world is a horrible place. That's just reality," he tells his son - but Dog Man offers a sweet alternative. Will Li'l Petey chose blood over stability? Will love turn Petey to the good side?

The filmmakers try to capture some of the anarchic qualities of the comics, like adding "Dun, Dun Dunny" in large letters on the screen at a dramatic moment, but they're trying too hard and the humor is restrained. It needs more zany.

None of the voice actors cover themselves in glory except Gervais, as the demonic fish, who comes closest to stealing this movie. But it's a bewildering adaptation. A line from Petey may sum up what this all really feels like - a bit of a cash grab: "So long, suckers."

"Dog Man," a Universal Pictures released in theaters last Friday, is rated PG for "some action and rude humor." Running time: 89 minutes. Two stars out of four. (AP)

Experts to discuss breakthroughs in nuclear medicine

Kuwait to host 'Medical Advances in Nuclear Medicine' conference

By Marwa Al-Bahrawi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 4: The Nuclear Medicine Departments Council is organizing the 'Medical Advances in Molecular Imaging and Nuclear Medicine Conference' for three days from February 13 under the patronage of the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi and with the participation of experts and leaders in the field of nuclear medicine at the Gulf, regional, and international levels.

In a press statement issued yesterday, the Chair of the Nuclear Medicine Departments Council and Chair of the conference Dr. Abdul Redha Ismail stated that the confer-

ence aims to highlight the important role of nuclear medicine in diagnosing diseases, providing treatment services, and managing patient treatment plans. This contributes to improving diagnostic and treatment outcomes for several medical conditions.

The conference will address the latest innovations and technological advancements in the field, as well as enhance cooperation in the Gulf region and internationally. It will provide a platform for exchanging expertise with the global medical community and reviewing the latest scientific research and innovations in the field of nuclear medicine.

It serves as a pioneering platform that brings together doctors, experts, and specialists in the field of nuclear

medicine and molecular imaging.

Dr. Abdul Redha Ismail highlighted that this field is experiencing rapid developments and huge leaps in diagnosis and treatment through modern technologies, advanced radioactive isotopes, and precise devices that contribute to improving the quality of health care.

Meanwhile, the Vice President of the conference Dr. Shaima Al-Farsi said the conference will showcase the latest global developments in nuclear medicine and molecular imaging through more than 45 scientific sessions.

She explained that these sessions will be presented by over 20 specialized lecturers from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, as well as several Arab and interna-

tional experts.

The conference will cover topics related to Gulf expertise in nuclear medicine, including the latest advancements in diagnosing heart and endocrine diseases, nuclear diagnosis of bone diseases, common illnesses in children, and the recent developments in molecular imaging for the diagnosis and treatment of cancerous tumors and diseases of the digestive and lymphatic systems.

Dr. Shaima Al-Farsi stressed that the conference aims to create an interactive environment that enhances the exchange of knowledge and expertise among specialists, thereby contributing to the improvement of medical services in accordance with the best international practices.

Conference opens Feb 6

Conference to present latest advances in skin treatment

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Kuwait Conference on Dermatology, Laser and Cosmetic Medicine is scheduled to commence tomorrow, February 6, 2025, under the patronage of the Minister of Health, Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The three-day event will feature a distinguished group of experts and specialists from around the globe.

Dr. Abeer Al-Badali, Secretary-General of the Kuwait Dermatology Association, stated that the conference aims to highlight the latest advancements in the diagnosis and treatment of skin diseases, as well as modern techniques in laser and cos-

metic medicine.

Additionally, it will review the most recent scientific research and clinical trials in these fields.

This conference serves as a significant platform for professionals to exchange knowledge, discuss innovations, and collaborate on enhancing dermatological practices.

Participants can look forward to engaging sessions, workshops, and presentations that address current challenges and future directions in dermatology and aesthetic medicine.

For more information and updates, please visit the official website of the Kuwait Dermatology Association.

Breakthrough in neurodegenerative disease treatment

Spine implant helped 3 people with muscle-wasting disease walk better

WASHINGTON, Feb 5, (AP): Three people with a muscle-destroying disease destined to worsen got a little stronger - able to stand and walk more easily - when an implanted device zapped their spinal cord.

On Wednesday, researchers reported what they called the first evidence that a spine-stimulating implant already being tested for paralysis might also aid neurodegenerative diseases like spinal muscle atrophy - by restoring some muscle function, at least temporarily.

"These people were definitely not expecting an improvement," said Marco Capogrosso, an assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh who led the research. Yet over the month-long pilot study, "they were getting better and better."

Spinal muscle atrophy or SMA is a genetic disease that gradually destroys motor neurons, nerve cells in the spinal cord that control muscles. That leads muscles to waste away, especially in the legs, hips and shoulders and sometimes those involved with breathing and swallowing. There is no cure. A gene therapy can save the lives of very young children with a severe form of the disease, and there are some medicines to slow worsening in older patients.

Stimulating the spinal cord with low levels of electricity has long been used to treat chronic pain but Capogrosso's team also has tested it to help people paralyzed from strokes or spinal cord injury move their limbs unaided. While turned on, it zaps circuits of dormant nerves downstream of the injury to activate muscles.

Then Capogrosso wondered if that same technology might help SMA in a similar way - by revving up related sensory nerves so they wake up damaged muscle cells, helping them move to combat wasting.

The Pitt researchers implanted elec-



This image from video provided by UPMC and University of Pittsburgh Health Sciences shows Doug McCullough, who has spinal muscular atrophy, during tests of experimental spinal cord stimulation to improve muscle function in Pittsburgh, on March 14, 2023. (AP)

trodes over the lower spinal cord of three adults with SMA and tested their muscle strength, fatigue, range of motion and changes in gait and walking distance when the device was firing and when it was turned off.

It didn't restore normal movement but with just a few hours of spinal stimulation a week, all quickly saw improvements in muscle strength and function, researchers reported in the journal Nature Medicine.

"With a progressive disease you never get any better," said study participant Doug McCullough, 57, of Franklin Park, New Jersey. "Either you're staying stable or getting worse. So having any improvement is just a really surreal and very exciting benefit."

All three participants significantly increased how far they could walk in six minutes, and one who initially

couldn't stand from a kneeling position could by the study's end, Capogrosso said. And McCullough's gait changed so that each step was about three times longer.

"They get less fatigued so they can walk for longer," Capogrosso said. "Even a person this many years into the disease can improve."

Intriguingly, researchers found the improvements didn't disappear as soon as the stimulator was switched off, though they did fade as participants were tracked after the study ended.

McCullough said even when the stimulator was turned off, some nights his legs "would just feel supercharged." While he understood that the device had to be removed at the study's end, he was disappointed. He said there were some lingering benefits at his six-week check-up, but none after six months.

RFK Jr. slammed

US Senate misled on measles deaths

WELLINGTON, New Zealand, Feb 5, (AP): Samoa's top health official on Monday denounced as "a complete lie" remarks that Robert F. Kennedy Jr. made during his bid to become US health secretary, rejecting his claim that some who died in the country's 2019 measles epidemic didn't have the disease.

"We don't know what was killing them," Kennedy said during tense US Senate hearings last week on whether he should oversee the US Department of Health and Human Services, suggesting that the cause of the 83 deaths - mostly of children under age 5 - was unclear. "It's a total fabrication," Samoa Director-General of Health Dr. Alec Ekeroma told The Associated Press of Kennedy's comments.

US senators grilled Kennedy last week over his 2019 Samoa trip, accusing him of downplaying his role in the epidemic.

The outbreak devastated the Pacific island nation in 2019, killing 83 people in a population of 200,000. Vaccination rates were historically low because of poor public health management and the 2018 deaths of two babies whose vaccines were incorrectly prepared, prompting fears that the MMR immunization was unsafe before the nature of the error was discovered.

The government suspended vaccinations for 10 months before the outbreak - the period when Kennedy visited. His trip was organized by a Samoan anti-vaccine influencer, according to a 2021 blog post by Kennedy.

On Wednesday, Kennedy denied that his visit had fueled anti-vaccine sentiment. A spokesperson didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on Monday.

"Anti-vaxxers from New Zealand came to be with him here," Ekeroma said. "That's how I know that his influence can be far-reaching."

"When the tissue samples were sent to New Zealand, most of those people did not have measles," Kennedy told U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat. Ekeroma, a medical doctor who also holds a doctorate in health, said that the claim was a "huge denial" of the fact that doctors from several countries traveled to Samoa to treat measles patients.

The Samoan official wasn't the health chief during the outbreak, but confirmed key details with his predecessor, he said. Only one autopsy was carried out and no postmortem tissue samples were sent abroad, which was not unusual because measles is a simple disease to diagnose, said Ekeroma. Blood samples from living patients were sent to Australia and New Zealand, where the public health agency said Monday that testing had confirmed the same strain of measles circulating in New Zealand at the time.

"I went there - nothing to do with vaccines," Kennedy said Wednesday. "I went there to introduce a medical informatics system that would digitalize records in Samoa and make health delivery much more efficient."

Mmm, that looks yummy!

The colors we see make a difference in food we eat

NEW YORK, Feb 5, (AP): You know you've said it. We all have. "Mmm, that looks so delicious - I want to try some!" That's because when it comes to what we eat, it's not just a matter of taste.

What foods and drinks look like - the colors we see before the first morsels or sips hit our taste buds - have mattered to people for millennia. And nowhere has that been more blatant than the American food palate, where the visual spectrum we choose from includes not only the primary colors but artificial ones that nature couldn't even dream up.

For well over a century, food manufacturers in the United States have used synthetic dyes in their products as part of their production and marketing efforts. Often, it's been in hopes of making a mass-produced food look as fresh and natural as possible, reminiscent of the raw ingredients used in its production. In other cases, it's been about making an item look interesting or distinctive from competitors, like candies or desserts in an electric blue or neon pink. Think "blue raspberry Slurpee" or "Flamin' Hot Cheetos."

It hasn't been without controversy. Over the decades, there have been pushback and government regulation over just HOW food and drink have been colored, most recently with the decision last month from the federal Food and Drug Administration to ban red dye No. 3 from foods and oral-ingested drugs because of concerns over a possible cancer risk. But no one's calling for food NOT to be colorful.

That's because there's no escaping the importance of what we see when it comes to what we eat, says Devina Wadhwa, faculty associate at the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts of Arizona State University.

"Your first sensory contact, if your eyes are open, is going to be sight," she says. "That's going to be the first judgment we're going to make."

The food manufacturers of the late 19th century knew they had to get the visual appeal right. It was part of their marketing, as a shorthand to encourage brand recognition, to make consumers feel comfortable about quality and overcome worries (or realities) about spoilage as food production became industrialized, says Ai Hisano, author of "Visualizing Taste: How Business Changed the Look of What You Eat." Synthetic dyes helped overcome problems like foods losing color in the production process and helped make foods look more "natural," she says. Then, over time, dyes were deployed to make foods look "fun" and appealing to audiences like young children. (That doesn't mean manufacturers didn't sometimes use colorants that could even be deadly - hence the reason there's regulation.)

She pointed to the mid-20th century example of cake mixes, which reduced the amount of effort required to bake a cake at home because most of the ingredients were already included. Food companies began promoting colorful icing for the cakes as a way women baking at home "could kind of present their personality even though they are making a pre-mixed cake," Hisano says.

The connections we make between colors and foods are learned, Wadhwa says. "Throughout our lives, we make associations which mean things. Cake is associated with birthdays. Ice cream is associated with parties and good times, so everything is associative learning. Color is one of those things that we have this tendency to learn about different flavor pairings."

Retinal scans may help identify diabetes, MS, dementia

Retinal thickness linked to common diseases

SYDNEY, Feb 5, (Xinhua): A team of Australian-led international researchers studying thousands of eyes have found that retinal thickness could be an early indicator of diseases such as type 2 diabetes and dementia.

Researchers led by the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research (WEHI) in Melbourne analyzed over 50,000 eyes to better understand how retinal differences are linked to various diseases, according to a news release published on the WEHI website on Wednesday.

By producing maps of the retina in unprecedented detail, the researchers found that retinal thinning is connected to common conditions, including type 2 diabetes, dementia and multiple scler-

osis (MS).

The retina, the light-sensitive layer of tissue at the back of the eye, is part of the central nervous system, which comprises the brain and the spinal cord. Dementia, diabetes and MS are all linked to the degeneration or disruption of the system.

Retinal thinning, or lattice degeneration, refers to the gradual loss of tissue in the retina.

Vicki Jackson, leader of the new research from WEHI, said the findings show that retinal imaging could be used as a window to the central nervous system to help manage disease.

"Our maps' fine-scale measurements reveal critical new details about connections between retinal thinning and a

range of common conditions," she said in a media release on Wednesday.

"This research underscores the potential for retinal thickness to act as a diagnostic biomarker to aid in detecting and tracking the progression of numerous diseases." The team, which included researchers from the UK and the United States, used AI to create the 50,000 maps with measurements at over 29,000 points across each retina.

The detailed maps allowed the team to identify 294 genes that influence retinal thickness and play an important role in disease.

Researchers said the findings open up new possibilities for using routine eye imaging as a tool to screen for and manage diseases.

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SPORTS

Georgia Tech overcomes Clemson in 3OT

St. John's passes 1st test of big week against Marquette

NEW YORK, Feb 5, (AP): It's been a long time since St. John's enjoyed this much success, and energized fans are starting to feel it.

"We want UConn! We want UConn!" a few chanted during the waning seconds on Tuesday night as the 12th-ranked Red Storm polished off a 70-64 victory over No. 11 Marquette in their Big East showdown at Madison Square Garden.

It was a rousing start to a measuring-stick week for Hall of Fame coach Rick Pitino's streaking team, which maintained sole possession of first place in the conference and improved to 1-1 against ranked opponents this season.

Up next is a visit Friday night to No. 19 UConn, the two-time defending national champion.

"It's a nice feeling. It's good to enjoy it. But we know we're not done," guard Kadary Richmond said.

Richmond, a Seton Hall transfer, had 18 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists in his latest outstanding all-around performance.

Naithan George scored 28 points, Baye Ndongo scored seven of his 18 points in triple-overtime and Georgia Tech beat Clemson 89-86.

Ndongo's hook shot gave Georgia Tech an 87-84 lead with 1:57 left. Chase Hunter's layup pulled Clemson within one before Ndongo made two shots from the free-throw line. Hunter missed a 3-pointer on the Tigers' final possession.

Tech has won back-to-back games for the first time since a three-game winning streak ended with a 62-55

loss at Syracuse on Jan. 7.

George was 12 of 26 from the field and Ndongo grabbed a game-high 13 rebounds. Duncan Powell scored 19 points for Georgia Tech (11-12, 5-7 ACC). Lance Terry added 12 points and 10 rebounds. Ibrahim Souare scored nine points and had 12 of the Yellow Jackets' 56 rebounds.

David N'Guessan scored 22 points, including two free throws with 55.7 seconds left, and Kansas State took advantage of Arizona State missing two free throws at 4.1 for a 71-70 victory.

After N'Guessan's free throws, Alston Mason made two at the stripe to get Arizona State within 71-70 with 41.7 left. Dug McDaniel missed a 3-pointer for Kansas State and Arizona State guard BJ Freeman grabbed the

defensive rebound before racing the other way.

Freeman had it poked away but it ended up in the hands of Jayden Quaintance, who was fouled on a dunk attempt with 4.1 left. Quaintance, the youngest player in Division I, hit the back iron on both free throws and McDaniel secured the rebound and passed it ahead to run out the clock.

Nick Davidson scored 23 of his 25 points in the second half to help Nevada defeat Air Force 74-60.

Davidson also added five rebounds for the Wolf Pack (13-10, 5-7 Mountain West Conference). Kobe Sanders scored 21 points while going 7 of 10 from the floor, including 2 for 4 from 3-point range, and 5 for 6 from the line and added three steals. Xavier Dusell shot 4 for 8, including 3 for 6 from beyond the arc to finish with 11 points.

Lakers thrash Clippers with Luka watching on the bench

Embiid's triple-double leads 76ers to victory over Mavericks



Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid, center, pulls in a rebound between Dallas Mavericks' Klay Thompson, left, and Kelly Oubre Jr. during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

INGLEWOOD, Calif., Feb 5, (AP): LeBron James had 26 points, nine assists and eight rebounds, and Luka Doncic watched approvingly from the bench while the Los Angeles Lakers thrashed the Los Angeles Clippers 122-97.

Doncic clapped and occasionally fist-pumped during the Lakers' outstanding performance in their first game since they made the seismic trade to acquire the All-NBA scoring champion in exchange for star big man Anthony Davis. James and Doncic, who is close to a return from a strained calf, sat next to each other and talked at times.

Austin Reaves and Rui Hachimura scored 20 points apiece for the Lakers, who finished a six-game trip with five victories despite losing Davis to injury even before the trade. The Lakers' victory was their first at Intuit Dome, their cross-town rivals' sparkling new arena.

Norman Powell scored 20 points for the Clippers (28-22), who fell two games behind the fifth-place Lakers (29-19) in the West.

Philadelphia, Joel Embiid had 29 points, 11 rebounds, and 10 assists in his first action in a month to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 118-116 over the Dallas Mavericks, who fell to 0-2 since trading star Luka Doncic to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Embiid recorded his first triple-double of an injury-plagued season in which he's appeared in just 14 games. A left knee injury sidelined the seven-time All-Star for the previous 15 games, and he wore a large brace on the knee.

But he looked like his usual self, especially down the stretch. Embiid's layup with 22 seconds left put Philadelphia ahead by a point. He grabbed a rebound on the Mavericks' next pos-

session and then defended the game's final play when Dallas turned it over.

Tyrese Maxey had 33 points and 13 assists for the Sixers.

Kyrie Irving scored 34 points for the Mavs and Naji Marshall added 19. Celtics 112, Cavaliers 105

In Cleveland, Jayson Tatum scored 22 points, Derrick White added 20 and Boston showed their championship makeup down the stretch with a win over Cleveland in a matchup of the Eastern Conference's top teams.

The defending NBA titlists executed in the final minutes and held off the Cavs, who lost for just the fourth time in 28 home games.

Kristaps Porzingis added 19 points, and Jaylen Brown scored 16 with nine rebounds, as Boston won its fourth straight and improved to 2-1 against Cleveland this season.

Donovan Mitchell scored 31 points and Darius Garland 25 for the Cavs, who cut a 15-point deficit to four in the fourth quarter.

But the Celtics, who have won four straight, didn't buckle and responded in every crucial moment to put away the Cavs.

Jarrett Allen had 17 points and 18

rebounds for Cleveland.

Nets 99, Rockets 97

In New York, Keon Johnson and D'Angelo Russell made 3-pointers in the final 10 seconds, and Brooklyn stunned Houston for their first home victory in two months.

Brooklyn trailed 97-93 when Tosan Evbuomwan inbounded the ball to Johnson, who made a 3 from the wing with 8.1 seconds left. Houston's Amen Thompson then threw an inbounds pass that skipped past Dillon Brooks, and Evbuomwan tipped it to Russell, who buried a 3 to put the Nets ahead with 3.4 seconds remaining.

Jalen Green missed a deep 3 at the buzzer for the Rockets as Brooklyn (17-33) ended its 11-game skid at Barclays Center.

Johnson scored 22 points, and Evbuomwan and Nic Claxton each scored 14. Russell had 10 points on 3-of-15 shooting.

Knicks 121, Raptors 115

In Toronto, Karl-Anthony Towns had 27 points and 20 rebounds, Jalen Brunson scored 28 points and New York held on to beat Toronto for their eighth win in 10 games.

Mikal Bridges and Precious Achiu-

wa each scored 17 points as the Knicks won their eighth straight meeting with the Raptors. Josh Hart added 15 points as all five Knicks starters reached double digits.

Towns had nearly half of New York's 43 total rebounds. The veteran big man has had two 22-rebound games this season. He had a career-high 27 rebounds against New Orleans on Jan. 12, 2019.

Scottie Barnes scored 23 points and Jamal Shad had a career-high 16 for the short-handed Raptors. Toronto played without leading scorer RJ Barrett (concussion protocol) and lost center Jakob Poeltl (right hip) at halftime.

Bulls 133, Heat 124

In Chicago, rookie Matas Buzelis scored a career-best 24 points and Josh Giddey matched it to help Chicago top Miami.

Coby White scored 22 points and Ayo Dosunmu added 21 points and nine assists for the Bulls, who played their first game since trading two-time All-Star Zach LaVine to Sacramento late Sunday.

Tyler Herro and Bam Adebayo each scored 23 for Miami, which had won three of four.

The Bulls trailed 118-114 with five minutes to play but an 11-2 run helped secure the win.

Trail Blazers 112, Pacers 89

In Portland, Anfernee Simons had 22 points and Portland won their fifth straight game with a victory over Indiana.

Jerami Grant added 20 points for the Blazers, who have won nine of their last 10.

Andrew Nembhard scored 17 points for the Pacers in the loss, which snapped a four-game winning streak.

T.J. McConnell's basket got the Pacers within 80-74 in the fourth quarter but Scoot Henderson hit a 3-pointer from distance that gave the Blazers an 89-76 lead with 6:10 left.

The Pacers have won 12 of 15 since the start of the year and rank among the top five in the league for offense and defense over that span.

Liverpool coach isn't so keen

Refs set to make in-stadium announcements on VAR calls

LONDON, Feb 5, (AP): Referees are set to make in-stadium announcements about the outcome of video reviews in the Premier League from the start of next season - and Liverpool manager Arne Slot isn't a fan.

The protocol is currently being trialed in this season's English League Cup semifinals, with a first announcement coming in the first leg of Tottenham's match with Liverpool when a goal for Spurs was ruled out for offside.

Tony Scholes, the Premier League's chief football officer, told reporters the protocol could now be used in league play, too.

Asked for his reaction, Slot said "for me, that's not necessary", but he did acknowledge it might benefit match-going fans in the stadium.

"If the fans like it and it's something nice for the fans, let's do this," said Slot, speaking Wednesday ahead of the second leg against Tottenham on Thursday, which Liverpool goes into trailing 1-0. "But I wonder if we are all going to like this."

On that occasion in the first leg, referee Stuart Attwell used the public address system to announce via a wireless microphone that the goal scored by Tottenham striker Dominic Solanke in the 76th minute had been ruled out for offside. Attwell spoke after a VAR review lasting around two minutes.

Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou wasn't impressed with the historic moment at the time, saying: "If people think that announcement tonight added anything to the game, I'm sorry. I mean, really, just get on with it."

Slot was more concerned that the officials chose to make an announcement about what he described as an "obvious" decision rather than on a more contentious call, when Tottenham midfielder Lucas Bergvall avoided getting a second yellow card for a foul on Kostas Tsimikas.

While Tsimikas was off the field, waiting to come back on having received treatment, Bergvall scored the only goal of the game.

"I think the one we were more interested in was why he didn't give the second yellow card and that is something he didn't have to explain," Slot said.



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah, background right, scores his side's second goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Bournemouth and Liverpool at the Vitality stadium in Bournemouth, England. (AP)

Best of the Rest

Jardim takes charge of Cruzeiro: Former Sporting Lisbon and Monaco boss Leonardo Jardim has been appointed manager of Cruzeiro, the Brazilian Serie A side said.

Jardim replaces Fernando Diniz, who was sacked last week after the club's poor start to the season.

"I'm very happy to have signed for Cruzeiro. I'll see you soon," Jardim said in a short video posted on Cruzeiro's social media accounts. (Xinhua)

Alimi joins Dalian: Chinese Super League (CSL) club Dalian Yingbo announced the signing of North Macedonia player Isnik Alimi on Wednesday.

The newly-promoted CSL side signed Alimi on a reported 400,000-euro deal with Sepsis OSK of Romania.

"As a versatile midfielder good at both attack and defense, Alimi will further bolster Dalian Yingbo's midfield depth and enrich its tactical options," the Dalian side said in a statement. (Xinhua)

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Canada wing back Davies decides to stay with Bayern

MUNICH, Feb 5, (AP): Canada wing back Alphonso Davies has finally signed a contract extension with Bayern Munich.

The Bavarian powerhouse announced that the 24-year-old Davies signed a deal through June 2030. His contract was set to expire at the end of this season.

"Phonzy has been playing for Bayern since he was 18 and quickly embraced the club," Bayern's board member for sport Max Eberl said in the team's announce-

ment. "We see him as one of the figures in the new generation of our team who are increasingly taking on responsibility. He's grown up here and will continue to grow with the team."

Talks between the club and player were protracted amid reported interest from Real Madrid. Eberl said in March 2024 that Bayern had made its final offer to Davies for an extension. But Madrid failed to act decisively on its supposed interest and Davies

finally opted to stay at the club that he joined in 2018 for a then-record MLS fee from the Vancouver Whitecaps.

"I came to FC Bayern when I was 18 and just wanted to learn as much as possible every day to become one of the best in my position," Davies said. "Now I'm looking forward to another five years together. I've already achieved a lot here, but there's more to come."

Davies was born in the Buduburam refu-

gee camp west of Accra in Ghana to parents who had fled civil war in Monrovia, Liberia. They moved in 2006 when he was 5 to Edmonton, where Davies began playing soccer, first at school, then at a free after-school league for inner-city children.

Davies joined the Whitecaps' residency program when he was 14, going on to become the youngest player to appear in the United Soccer League and the first born this century to play in the MLS.

SPORTS



Bologna's Thijs Dallinga, left, fights for the ball with Atalanta's Isak Hien during an Italian Italy Cup soccer match between Atalanta and Bologna, Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2025, at Gewiss Stadium in Bergamo, Italy. (AP)



Stuttgart's Maximilian Mittelstädt, left, and Augsburg's Marius Wolf battle for the ball during the German soccer cup, DFB Pokal, quarter-final soccer match between VfB Stuttgart and FC Augsburg in Stuttgart, Germany. (AP)

Bologna reaches Cup semis for first time in 26 years

Undav shoots Stuttgart into German Cup last four

BERGAMO, Italy, Feb 5, (AP): Santiago Castro had an immediate impact off the bench as he scored the goal to send Bologna into the Italian Cup semifinals for the first time in 26 years.

Bologna won 1-0 at last year's runner-up Atalanta. The last time Bologna was in the semifinal was in 1999, when it lost 4-2 to Fiorentina.

There were chances for both sides in a high-tempo match in Bergamo but it was Bologna that broke the deadlock, 10 minutes from time, when Castro escaped his marker at the far post to head in Charalampos Lykogiannis' perfectly-weighted free kick.

The 20-year-old Argentinian had come off the bench

less than two minutes earlier.

The cup exit continued a poor start to the new year for Atalanta, which has only beaten Sturm Graz and Como in its 10 matches since the beginning of 2025.

Deniz Undav fired Stuttgart into the German Cup semifinals with a 1-0 victory over Augsburg.

The Germany forward scored in the 30th minute after being set up by former Augsburg forward Ermedin Demirovic.

Augsburg had made the better start to the quarterfinal match, and the visitors also missed good chances to equalize in the second half with substitute Mert K m r drawing a good save from Alexander N bel and failing to make the most of another chance.

Stuttgart ended a three-game losing streak.

However, the game ended with an injury to Stuttgart midfielder Enzo Millot after a foul from Dimitrios Giannoulis, who was booked. Millot needed support to limp off the field.

Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone's son, Giuliano, scored two early goals as the team eased into the Copa del Rey semifinals with a 5-0 home victory over Getafe.

The 22-year-old Simeone netted twice in the first 17 minutes and Atletico reached the last-four of the Copa for the second straight season.

Samuel Lino also scored a first-half goal for the hosts at the Metropolitan stadium, and  ngel Correa and Alexander Sorloth added second-half goals.

Atletico, which last won the Copa in 2012-13, was eliminated by eventual champion Athletic Bilbao last season.

Simeone opened the scoring with a header in the eighth minute and doubled the lead from inside the area in a breakaway in the 17th. Lino scored the third goal after a neat move to clear a defender and find the far corner with a low shot in the 42nd. Correa made it 4-0 with a low strike from outside the area in the 78th and Sorloth closed the rout in the 86th.

Coach Diego Simeone used a few reserve players ahead of the team's crucial Spanish league match at first-place Real Madrid on Saturday. Atletico trails Madrid by one point.

Getafe, which had only one attempt on target in the first half, has only one win in its last four matches across all competitions. It hasn't made it to the Copa semifinals since 2009-10.

One venue remains uncertain

Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics 1 year away

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy, Feb 5, (AP): In Sochi, workers were still hammering away in the media village and shower water ran yellow when journalists from around the world arrived for the 2014 Winter Games.

The chaotic preparations for the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro were labeled the "worst" ever by a vice president of the International Olympic Committee.

The next Olympics, though, might set an unofficial record for running late on preparations.

That's because the century-old sliding center being completely rebuilt for the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Games is pushing the deadline so tight that the IOC has gone so far as to demand a Plan B option that would require moving bobsled, luge and skeleton events all the way to Lake Placid, New York, if the track in Italy isn't finished in time.

Thursday marks exactly one year to go before the Feb. 6, 2026 opening ceremony at the San Siro stadium and the track in Cortina is still a half-completed construction site.

The IOC has set a deadline for the end of next month for pre-certification of the Cortina track and nobody is saying for sure if it will pass the test.

But Fabio Saldini, the Italian government commissioner in charge of the 118 million euro (\$123 million) project, told The Associated Press during a recent visit that almost 70% of the track was completed - even if it was tough to tell inside the muddy and chaotic construction site.

With 180 people working from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m. every day to build the



A billboard advertising the Milan Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics is seen at one of the venues for the alpine ski discipline, in Bormio, Italy. (AP)

sliding center, the first ice is slated to be laid down on the track at the start of March.

"We have huge support from the construction firms, the government and (Infrastructure and Transport Minister Matteo) Salvini," Saldini said. "With everyone's support, we will be able to finish in time."

Construction began less than a year ago and no sliding track has been built in such a short timeframe. An official test event is slated for October, a step that has taken on more importance since the death of Georgian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili in a training crash hours before the start of the opening ceremony for the 2010 Vancouver Games.

The IOC would have preferred to use an active track in nearby Austria or Switzerland instead of rebuilding

the Cortina venue, which had been closed since 2008. But it let the local organizing committee select the Plan B option.

"We chose Lake Placid because it was the only place where they offered us the track without requiring us to make any investments," Milan-Cortina CEO Andrea Varnier told AP. "But we're counting on holding the sliding sports here in Cortina."

Added organizing committee president Giovanni Malag  about the Lake Placid backup plan: "It's just a formality. There's no substance to it."

Environmental groups have protested over climate damage due to the Cortina track's reconstruction.

"There were 800 trees cut down," Saldini said. "But they were not all 100 years old, like some people said.

And we're going to plant 10,000 trees when we're done."

General ticket sales for the games are about to start following a pre-registration process that drew in more than 350,000 requests - 70% of them from abroad from more than 210 countries.

Sliding is one of the Games' most inexpensive attractions with luge events going for as low as 40 euros (\$42) and bobsled for a maximum of 100 euros (\$104).

But what happens for ticket holders if the sliding track in Cortina isn't ready and events are moved to Lake Placid?

"It will be a whole different experience," said Paul Caine, the president of hospitality package provider On Location, about the prospect of moving from glitzy Cortina to upstate New York.

Caine noted that while "nobody wanted to go to Tahiti" for surfing events in French Polynesia during last year's Paris Games, hospitality packages were sold for the sailing competitions in Marseille, which is located in southern France - 3 1/2 hours by train from Paris.

On Location has received requests for hospitality packages from 62 countries so far, with ice hockey, biathlon and figure skating the most popular sports.

Private boxes for the opening ceremony at the iconic San Siro soccer stadium have already sold out.

These are the first Games to fully embrace cost-cutting reforms installed by IOC President Thomas Bach and use mostly existing venues - which has meant scattering the Games all over northern Italy.

Neymar cleared for Santos return

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb 5, (Xinhua): Neymar is free to make his eagerly awaited return to action for Santos after he was officially registered by the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF).

The 32-year-old last week signed a six-month contract with the club that launched his career after ending an injury-hit spell at Saudi Pro League side Al-Hilal by mutual consent.

"Neymar is now registered [and] ... is cleared to play official matches with Santos," read a CBF statement. "The CBF welcomes Neymar and wishes him luck in this new stage of his career."

Neymar, who played for Santos from 2009 to 2013, is expected to line up for his original club in the home clash against Botafogo-SP on Wednesday.

The Brazilian national team's all-time leading scorer made just seven appearances for Al-Hilal following his August 2023 move from Paris Saint-Germain.

The forward sustained a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament while playing for Brazil in a World Cup qualifier against Uruguay in October 2023. He returned to the pitch in October last year but has since struggled for form and fitness.

In a press conference last Friday, Neymar admitted he was not yet fully fit but said he was "ready and eager" to play.

"I need minutes, games. Just training won't get me into shape," he said. "I'll regain that over time, I'm in a better state than when I came back from injury [last October]."

Deportivo Riestra climbed to second in

Group B of Argentina's Primera Division Apertura standings on Tuesday with a 3-0 victory at Atletico Tucuman.

The visitors took the lead in the 39th minute through Nicolas Sansone, who swept a powerful first-time effort into the top-left corner after Mario Sanabria's cut-back.

Jonathan Herrera made it 2-0 in the 70th minute when he intercepted an errant backpass and coolly rounded goalkeeper Tomas Durso before completing the easiest of tap-ins.

Antony Alonso completed the rout by capitalizing on more lax defending as he blocked a rushed clearance from Durso, prompting the ball to rebound into an empty net.

The result leaves Deportivo Riestra with seven points from three games, two points behind group leaders Independiente. Atletico Tucuman is ninth in the 15-team group with three points so far.

Santos has signed winger Gabriel Veron on a season-long loan from Porto, the Brazilian Serie A side said on Tuesday.

Veron completed a medical and could make his debut in a home clash against Botafogo-SP on Wednesday after he was officially registered as a Santos player by the Brazilian Football Confederation.

"Gabriel Veron is another addition to Santos for the 2025 season," the club said in a statement, adding that it had an option to secure the 22-year-old on a permanent deal when his loan expires.

Veron joined Porto in July 2022 but has made just 26 first-team appearances for the Portuguese club.

He spent last season on loan at Cruzeiro, scoring six goals and providing two assists in 27 Brazilian Serie A matches.

Veron is the third attacking player signed by Santos in the past month, joining Neymar and Tiquinho Soares.



Neymar

'Perfect for short track speed skaters to achieve great results'

Games experts praise ice quality in Heilongjiang

HARBIN, Feb 5, (Xinhua): The 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin, the capital of China's northernmost Heilongjiang Province, is set to open on Friday, with experts praising the ice conditions at the Heilongjiang Ice Training Center.

"The ice is perfect for short track speed skaters to achieve great results," said Xu Xun, a technical representative from the Asian Skating Union. He noted that the ice temperature, indoor temperature, and humidity all meet international standards, allowing athletes to perform at their peak.

Xu, working alongside Kim Sohee of the Republic of Korea, a technical representative appointed by the International Skating Union (ISU), emphasized the meticulous preparations for the competition.

"Our main responsibility is to ensure that all technical requirements for short track speed skating are met, including the ice conditions, venue facilities, athlete lounges, and mixed zones. We'll fully record the relevant data and check everything," Xu said.

Harbin has a long history of hosting top-tier skating events, with its ice-making team boasting more than 40 years of experience. The team has worked on major international competitions, including the World Cup and World Championships.



Han Yu of China competes during the mixed doubles Round Robin Group B Session 3 match between Keremet Asanbaeva/Iskhak Abykeev of Kyrgyzstan and Han Yu/Wang Zhiyu of China in the curling event at 2025 Asian Winter Games in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua)

According to Yu Jinqiao, who has maintained ice rinks since 2009, the ice surface at Heilongjiang Ice Training Center is kept between minus six and minus seven degrees Celsius, with a thickness of 3.7 centimeters. The indoor temperature remains around 15 degrees Celsius, and humidity is maintained at 35 percent - all in line with ISU standards.

"Our team resurfaces the rink multiple times a day using triple-filtered purified water, and each

resurfacing takes around 20 minutes," Yu said. He added that, unlike traditional fuel-powered machines, the event is using electric ice resurfacers for a more eco-friendly approach.

As the competition nears, teams from South Korea, Kazakhstan, India, and China have already begun training at the venue.

"Many athletes tell us that the ice is perfect," Xu said.

Kazakhstan's short track speed skating team, consisting of six ath-

letes, has been training at the Heilongjiang Ice Training Center for three days.

"The rink is very good, and the ice is of high quality and fast. I think the athletes will achieve good results," said Petr Gamidov, head coach of Kazakhstan's short track speed skating team.

"Our goals are, of course, medals, and we hope the athletes will have an interesting and fair competition," Gamidov added.

Park Ji-won, a gold medal favorite from South Korea, told Maeil Business Newspaper after training on Wednesday that he felt comfortable on the ice.

"I think the ice suits me well. I believe I have better control and understanding of the ice than anyone else. I don't worry much about the ice because I believe in myself," Park said.

With short track speed skating involving aggressive, high-speed racing, ice quality is critical.

"During the relays, up to 20 athletes can be racing on the rink at the same time, which can damage the ice surface," Xu said. "Therefore, technical representatives will ensure that referees inspect the surface before every race to maintain competition fairness." The short track speed skating events for the 9th Asian Winter Games will take place from Feb. 7 to 9.

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France's Laura Gauche speeds down the course during a men's downhill training, at the Alpine Ski World Championships, in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria. (AP)

Sports

Kuwaiti sailing team seeks strong finish at Optimist Championship



The Kuwait sailing team.

DOHA, Feb 5: The head of the Kuwaiti sailing team delegation, Ibrahim Al-Furaih, announced that the team has commenced its participation in the Qatar International Optimist Championship 2025, organized by the Qatar Sailing and Rowing Federation in Doha.

Al-Furaih explained that the championship began with two races held under light to moderate wind conditions. The tournament consists of 10 races, with points accumulated in each race. The competitor with the fewest points will advance in the overall rankings.

He noted that the Kuwaiti team secured moderate points in the initial races and expressed hope that they would achieve lower scores in the upcoming

races to improve their standings in both the general and junior categories.

Al-Furaih highlighted that Hamad Al-Masoud earned a total of 59 points, placing him 26th overall. His ranking was affected by a black flag penalty he received in the first race due to a starting signal violation. Meanwhile, Abdulaziz Al-Mansour accumulated 60 points across two races, securing fourth place in the junior category.

The Kuwaiti delegation includes six sailors: Hamad Al-Masoud, Ali Anki, Badr Bu Hamad, Saleh Al-Madhen, Zakaria Bu Hamad, and Abdulaziz Al-Mansour, under the guidance of coach Ihab Al-Shanabi.

Sheikh Al-Nasser commends stable owners for 'boosting' horse racing



Sheikh Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser presents a commemorative shield to Rashid Yousef Bursali.

KUWAIT CITY, Feb 5: The Chairman of the Supreme Committee for Horse Racing and Secretary General of the Hunting and Equestrian Club, Sheikh Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser, emphasized the vital role of stable owners in enhancing competition and excitement in horse racing, driving participants to strive for top positions.

The 14th race meeting at the Hunting and Equestrian Club saw intense competition among several stables, all vying for the prestigious car prizes sponsored by Rashid Yousef Bursali, Dean of Bursali Stable. The horses "Haken de Carrere" (Al-Abraq Stable), "Mukafih" (Al-Nawader), "Mubaher" (Al-Badden), and "Mudar" (Al-Akshan) emerged victorious, securing the cars as part of the late Yousef Rashid Bursali Festival.

Sheikh Sabah Fahad Al-Nasser, along with Rashid Yousef Bursali, personally handed over the car keys to the winning stable representatives. Additionally, Sheikh Al-Nasser presented a commemorative shield to Bursali in recognition of his unwavering support for Kuwaiti equestrian sports.

Expressing his gratitude, Sheikh Al-Nasser thanked Bursali for his generous contributions to the equestrian community, highlighting the significance of the four car prizes.

For his part, Rashid Yousef Bursali reaffirmed his commitment to supporting the sport, noting that he has been awarding these prestigious prizes for over 35 years.

Kuwait ice hockey team roars back at Asian Winter Games

China loses to South Korea in overtime

HARBIN, China, Feb 5, (Agencies): The Kuwaiti ice hockey team secured a dominant 10-3 victory over Singapore in the second round of the 9th Asian Winter Games "Harbin 2025", currently underway in China. This marks Kuwait's first win in the tournament, placing it second in the group standings due to head-to-head results with Singapore, while Kyrgyzstan leads the group, and Bahrain sits in fourth place.

Ali Al-Marri, head of the Kuwaiti delegation, praised the team's outstanding performance and complete control over the match, congratulating the players on their well-deserved win. He emphasized that Kuwait's participation in this major continental event is a source of pride, commending the ice hockey team's strong showing.

Al-Marri also acknowledged the Kuwaiti curling team's efforts, highlighting its impressive performance despite being newly formed and competing against experienced, internationally ranked teams. He expressed his hopes for further success for all Kuwaiti teams in the tournament.

China lost its opening match 6-5 to South Korea in overtime in the men's ice hockey Group A match.

South Korea took an early lead when Lee Chong-min found the back of the net at 6:32. However, China responded quickly, with captain Zhang Jiaqi cutting inside from the right and scoring just two minutes later. With three min-



The Kuwait ice hockey team celebrates at the end of its match in China.

utes remaining in the first period, Yan Juncheng delivered a crucial shot that put the host ahead.

The second period saw Zheng Mingju and Guo Jianing strike in quick succession to put China 4-1 up. South Korea pulled one back through Ahn Jin-hui on a short-range shot and Kim Sang-yeob followed up with another just two minutes later, narrowing the gap to 4-3.

Kim scored his second in the third period, tying the match 4-4 with a well-placed shot, while China replied within

minutes as Yu Jilong found the net to make it 5-4. In a last-ditch effort, Lee's shot sent the match into overtime.

China's goalie Chen Shifeng made a crucial save with just 45 seconds remaining in the overtime before Kim Sang-wook snatched the winner for South Korea.

"South Korea is a stronger team, and we made more mistakes today. Our players are young and have limited experience at international competitions," said China's captain Zhang. "Anyway, we will do our best in the following

match, striving to win a medal."

In other Group A matches on Tuesday, Japan grabbed a dominant 15-0 victory over Chinese Taipei, while Kazakhstan swept past Thailand 12-0. On the women's side, South Korea routed Hong Kong, China 8-0, and Kazakhstan cruised past Thailand 9-0.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti curling team fell to Chinese Taipei 3-13 in its third Group 1 match, leaving it with three points after one win and two losses. The team had previously suffered a 3-12 defeat to Thailand.

Ning, Liu named as flagbearers for opening ceremony

HARBIN, Feb 5, (Xinhua): Ning Zhongyan and Liu Mengting have been named as the Chinese delegation's flagbearers for the opening ceremony of the 2025 Harbin Asian Winter Games.

Ning, 25, is a star speed skater who has won multiple ISU World Cup medals since 2019.

Liu, 20, made history in January by claiming her first FIS Freeski World Cup victory in the women's big air event in Klagenfurt, Austria.

The opening ceremony of the Harbin Asian Winter Games is scheduled to take place on Friday, Enditem. The upcoming Asian Winter Games in Harbin have emerged as a powerful bridge for culture exchange across Asia, serving as a universal language that transcends borders, a senior Thai Olympic Committee official said.

Dr. Supit Samahito, vice president of the Thai

Olympic Committee, told Xinhua in an interview that sports play a vital role in fostering cultural connections between countries and regions.

She praised China's expertise in hosting major sporting events, noting that it has raised expectations for the Harbin Games.

"The Asian Winter Games are not just a sporting event but also a unique opportunity for Asian countries and regions to showcase their cultures and deepen mutual understanding," she said.

"Although Thailand is a tropical country, its active participation in the Winter Games is a testament to cross-cultural exchange," she added. "Thai athletes competing in Harbin will not only refine their winter sports skills but also immerse themselves in the diverse cultures of their fellow competitors." According to the Thai Olympic Committee's website,

Thailand is set to send its largest-ever delegation to the Asian Winter Games in Harbin.

Samahito urged Asian countries to strengthen culture and sports cooperation by establishing more transnational tournaments and sports tourism initiatives, allowing sports to serve as a bridge for mutual understanding and regional unity.

Hosting sports events in Asia not only enhances competitive exchange but also showcases each nation's confidence in its cultural identity.

"The uniqueness and diversity of Asian cultures turn our sports events into more than just competitions - they become grand cultural celebrations," she said.

The year 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of Thailand-China diplomatic relations, and Samahito highlighted the deep-rooted cultural ties between the two nations.

US finishes 4th

Italy edges Switzerland to win team parallel event at worlds

SAALBACH-HINTERGLEMM, Austria, Feb 5, (AP): Italy beat Switzerland to win the mixed team parallel event that opened the Alpine skiing world championships.

Thomas Tumler was slow out of the gate in the decisive heat of the final and couldn't catch up to Italy's Alex Vinatzer. The final ended 2-2 and Italy won with an advantage of 0.45 seconds in total time.

It could be the start of a big championships for Italy, which has Federica Brignone and Sofia Goggia in top form and among the favorites in multiple events. "It's a good start because we invest a lot," Italian team leader Max Carca said. "We have a lot of expectations from the girls side."

The defending champion United States lost a chance for a medal when Isaiah Nelson lost control toward the end of the fourth and decisive run of the bronze-medal race - handing the medal to Sweden and leaving the Americans in fourth.

Host Austria, which had a first-round bye, was eliminated immediately by Sweden.

In the final, Giorgia Collomb beat Wendy Holdener before Luca Aerni equalized for Switzerland by beating Filippo Della Vite. Then Delphine Darbellay put Switzerland ahead when Lara Della Mea made a series of errors. But Vinatzer, who recently finished second in a World Cup slalom in Kitzbuehel, secured the title.

The women's super-G featuring Brignone, Goggia and Lindsey Vonn on Thursday is the first individual event of the championships. Mikaela Shiffrin is not going to pair with Lindsey Vonn in a dream team at the Alpine skiing world championships.

Shiffrin announced that she needs more time for training as she regains her form from a deep puncture wound and won't be entering the new team combined event at worlds.

Vonn, who returned to the circuit this season at age 40 after nearly six years of retirement, had been campaigning for a spot alongside Shiffrin in the event, which involves one squad member racing downhill and another racing slalom. The times of the two athletes on each team are added together to determine the results.

While Shiffrin returned last week and placed 10th in a slalom in Courchevel, France, after nearly two months out following a crash in Killington, Vermont, she said she's "continuing to take it one step at a time as I work to get back to 100%" and that "each day so far has come with a new set of challenges."

"With that said, I need to keep my energy focused on preparing for the giant slalom and slalom races during world championships, and will not be able to participate in the team combined," Shiffrin said on her social media accounts.

The women's team combined event is scheduled for next Tuesday - two days before the women's giant slalom and four days before the women's slalom.

Shiffrin and Vonn are the winningest female racers in World Cup history with 99 victories for Shiffrin and 82 for Vonn. Vonn is the all-time leader in World Cup downhill victories with 43 and Shiffrin holds the mark in slalom with 62 - both records among men and women.

"I think it would be probably one of the coolest things in ski racing to have 181 World Cup victories on one team," Vonn said Monday, before Shiffrin's announcement. "I don't see how that wouldn't be incredible. I don't know how she is physically, I haven't talked to her because she just came back. So I don't know if she's even competing in the combined. But if there is a chance to compete with her, I would absolutely love to."

Vonn could now pair with Paula Moltzan instead. Both Vonn and Moltzan grew up skiing at Buck Hill in Minnesota and Vonn was Moltzan's hero.



From left: Italy's Filippo Della Vite, Giorgia Collomb, Lara Della Mea and Alex Vinatzer celebrate on podium after winning the gold medal of the alpine ski, World Championship team parallel event, in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria. (AP)